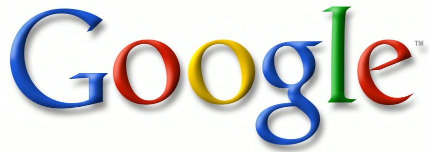

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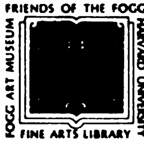

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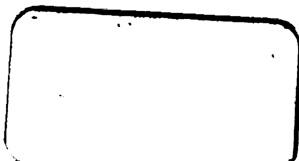
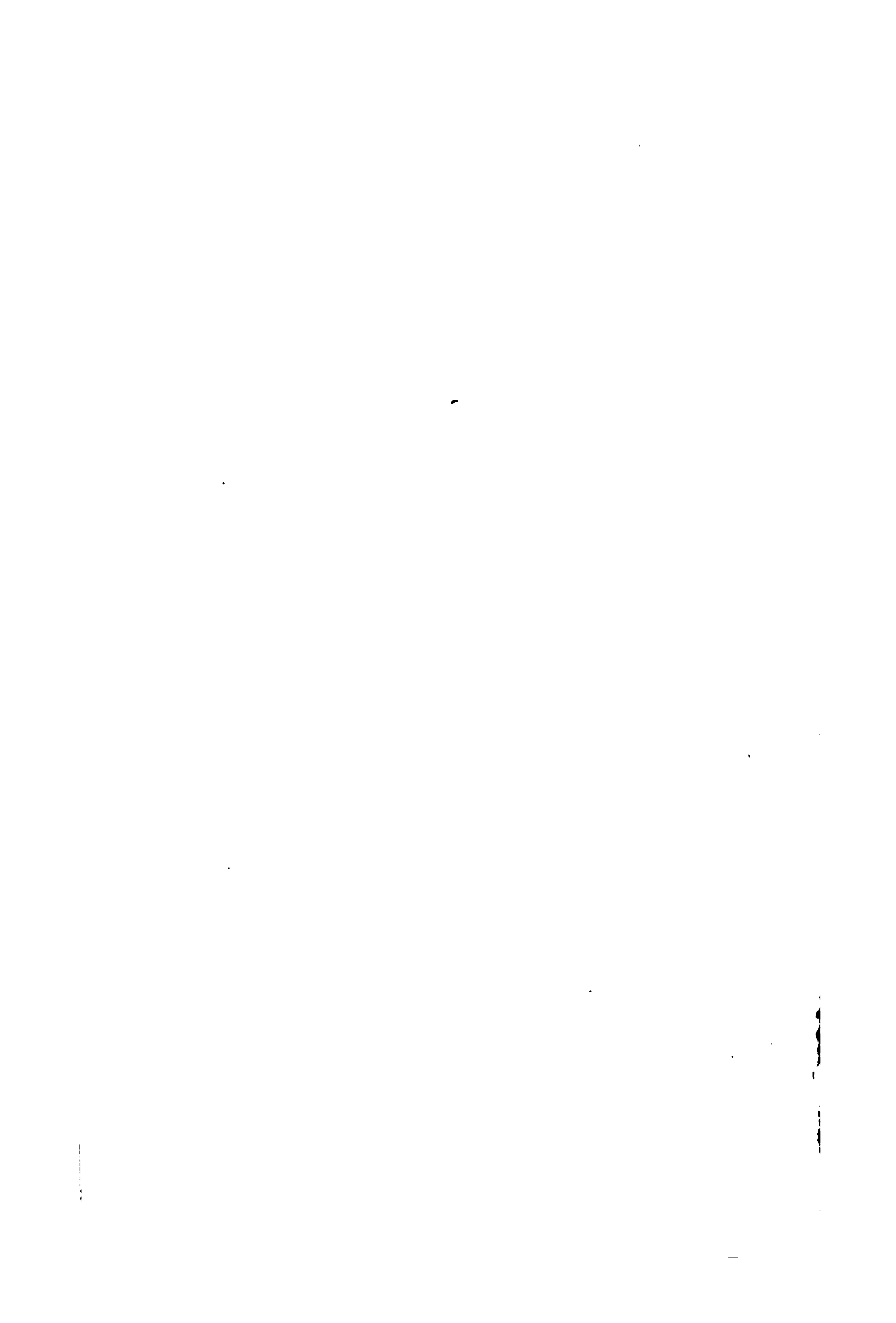


THE LIFE OF
MICHAEL ANGELO

PORTRAIT OF MICHAEL ANGELO

Attributed to Marcello Venusti



THE LIFE OF
MICHAEL ANGELO

BY ROMAIN ROLLAND
AUTHOR OF "JOHN CHRISTOPHER" ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY FREDERIC LEES

ILLUSTRATED

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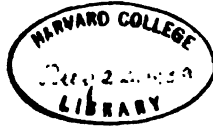

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PREFACE

In the National Museum in Florence is a marble statue which Michael Angelo called "The Victor." It represents the beautiful nude figure of a young man, with curly hair over a low forehead. Standing erect, he has placed his knee on the back of a bearded prisoner, who bends and, like an ox, stretches his head forward. But the victor looks not upon him. When about to strike he stays his hand, and turns away his sad mouth and irresolute eyes. His arm falls back towards his shoulder. He throws himself backwards. A desire for victory no longer fills his heart—it is repulsive to him. Though he has conquered, he in turn is vanquished.

This representation of heroic Doubt, this victory with shattered wings (which was the only one of all the works of Michael Angelo to remain in his Florence studio until the day of his death, and which Daniello da Volterra, the bosom friend who was acquainted with his thoughts, wished to use in the ornamentation of his catafalque) is Michael Angelo himself and the symbol of his whole life.

Suffering is infinite and assumes a multitude of forms. At one time it is caused by the blind tyranny

of things—poverty, sickness, the injustice of Fate, or the wickedness of man. At another time it has its seat in one's very being. It is then no less pitiable nor less fatal. For the choice of our being was not ours: we asked neither to live nor to be what we are.

The latter form of suffering was the one which afflicted Michael Angelo. He had the strength—he had the rare good fortune to be fashioned for struggling and conquering. He conquered. But what? He had no desire for victory. That was not what he wanted. Hamlet-like tragedy! Poignant contradiction between an heroic genius and a will which was not heroic, between imperious passions and a will which willed not!

Do not expect me to see in this, after so many other proofs of greatness, an additional mark of grandeur. Never will I admit that, because a man is very great, the world is not sufficient for him. Uneasiness of mind is not a sign of grandeur. Any want of harmony between a being and things, between life and its laws, proceeds, even in the case of great men, not from their greatness but their weakness. Why endeavour to hide this weakness? Is he who is weaker less worthy of love? He is infinitely worthier of it, inasmuch as he has greater need of it. I raise not statues to inaccessible heroes. Cowardly idealism, which diverts our eyes from the woes of life and the weaknesses of the soul, I abhor. We must tell this truth to a people who are too sensitive to the deceptive illusions of sonorous words: the heroic lie is a piece of cowardice. There is only one form of heroism in the

world, and it consists in seeing the world as it is—and in loving it.

The tragedy of destiny presented in the following pages is that of innate suffering, which has its origin at the root of a being, which gnaws it incessantly and will not leave it until its work of destruction is over. It shows us one of the most powerful of the types of that great human race which for nineteen centuries has filled the West with its cries of sorrow and faith—the Christian.

Some day, centuries and centuries ahead (supposing that our earth is still recollected), the people of the future will bend over the abyss into which our race has disappeared, as Dante did on the edge of Malebolge, with mingled feelings of admiration, horror and pity. But who will feel them keener than we have done—we who, as children, have experienced these anguishes; we who have seen those who were dearest to us strive against them; we whose throats know the acrid and intoxicating odour of Christian pessimism; we who, on certain occasions, have had to make an effort in order not to give way, like others, in moments of doubt, to the frenzy of the Divine Nothingness?

God! Eternal life! Refuge of those who do not succeed in living here below! Faith, which is very often but a lack of faith in life, a lack of faith in the future, a lack of faith in oneself, a lack of courage, and a lack of joy! . . . We are aware of the number of defeats on which your sorrowful victory is based!

And it is for that reason, Christians, that I love you, for I pity you. I pity you and admire your melancholy. You sadden the world, but you beautify it. The world will be poorer when your sorrow is no longer there. In this age of cowards, who tremble when face to face with sorrow and noisily lay claim to their right to happiness, which, as often as not, is the right to the unhappiness of others, let us have the courage to look sorrow in the face and venerate it! Blessed be joy, but blessed also be sorrow! One is the sister to the other and both are saints! They make the world and expand the souls of the great. They are strength, they are life, they are God! He who loves not both of them, loves neither the one nor the other. And he who has relished them knows the value of life and the sweetness of leaving it.

At the end of this tragic history I am tormented by a scruple. I ask myself whether, in wishing to give those who suffer companions of sorrow to support them, I have not added the sorrow of the latter to that of the former. Ought I not rather to have shown, as so many others have done, only the heroic side of the life of my hero, and to have thrown a veil over his sadness?

No! Truth above all things! I have not promised my friends happiness at the price of a lie—happiness in any and every case, at no matter what cost. I promised them truth, even at the price of happiness—virile truth which fashions eternal souls. Its breath is rough, but it is pure. Let us bathe our anæmic hearts in it.

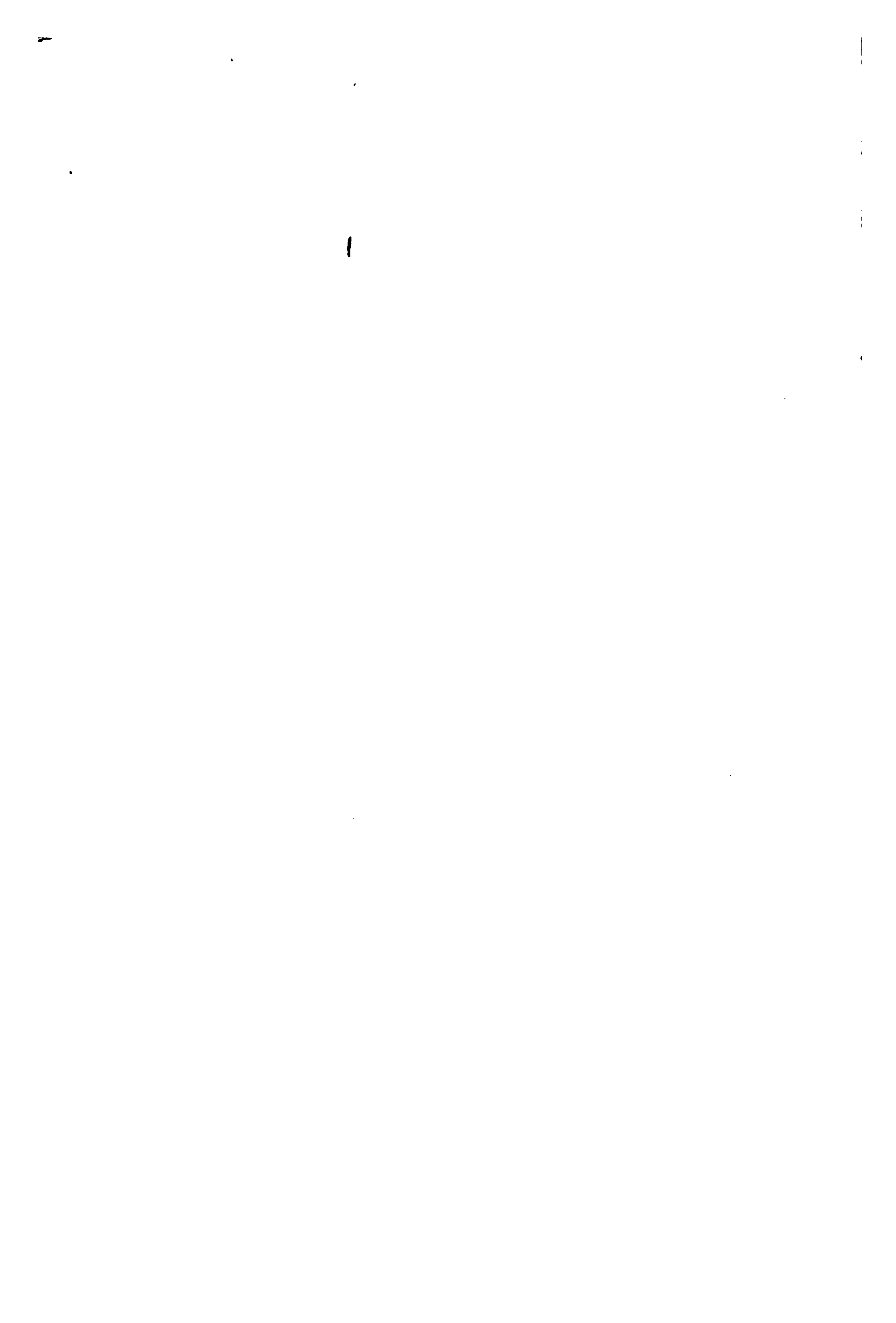
Great souls are like mountain summits. The wind

beats upon them, clouds envelop them ; but we breathe better and deeper there than elsewhere. The air on those heights possesses a purity which cleanses the heart of its defilements, and when the clouds part we dominate the human race.

Such was that colossal mountain which towered above the Italy of the Renaissance and whose tortured profile we see far away in the sky.

I do not claim that the generality of mankind can live on those summits, but that once a year they ought to ascend them on a pilgrimage. There they will renew the air of their lungs and the blood of their veins. Up there they will feel that they are nearer the Eternal. And afterwards they will descend towards the plains of life with their hearts tempered for the daily struggle.

ROMAIN ROLLAND



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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

He was a Florentine citizen—of that Florence with sombre palaces, lanciform towers, dry undulating hills, sharply defined against a deep blue sky and covered with little black fusiform cypresses and a silver scarf of olive-trees which move like the waves of the sea—of that intensely elegant Florence where the pale, ironic face of Lorenzo de' Medici, and Machiavelli, with his large, cunning mouth, used to meet "La Primavera," and the chlorotic, pale golden-haired Venuses of Botticelli—of that feverish, proud and neurotic Florence which was the prey of every form of fanaticism, which was agitated by every form of religious or social hysteria, where every one was a free man and where every one was a tyrant, where it was so good to live, and where life was a hell—of that city of intelligent, intolerant, enthusiastic and malignant citizens, who possessed tongues that could sting and minds that were full of suspicion, who jealously spied one another and tore each other to pieces—that city where there was no room for the free mind of a Leonardo, where Botticelli ended in the deluded mysticism of a Scotch Puritan; where the goat-like visaged, ardent-eyed Savonarola ordered his monks to dance around a bonfire of works of art, and where, three years later, the pile was raised to burn the prophet.

Michael Angelo belonged to that city and to those days, with all their prejudices, passions, and feverish life.

Certainly he was not tender towards his compatriots. With his broad-chested, open-air genius, he despised their narrow artistic outlook, their pretentious intellect, their dull realism, their sentimentalism, and their morbid subtlety. He handled them roughly; but he loved them nevertheless. As regards his native place, he did not possess Leonardo's smiling indifference. When far from Florence he was consumed with home-sickness.[1] During his whole life he wore himself out in vain efforts to live there. He was in Florence in the tragic hour of war; and it was his desire "to return there at least when dead, since he had been unable to do so when alive."[2]

Old Florentine that he was, he was filled with the pride of his blood and his race.[3] He was prouder of his

[1] "From time to time I fall into a state of great melancholy, as happens to those who are far from their home." (Letter of August 19, 1497, Rome.)

[2] He was thinking of himself when he made his friend, Cecchino dei Bracci, one of the banished Florentines who lived in Rome, say: "Death is dear to me, since I shall owe it the happiness of returning to my native place, which was closed to me whilst I was alive." ("Poems of Michael Angelo," Carl Frey's edition, lxxiii. 24.)

[3] The Buonarroti Simoni, natives of Settignano, are mentioned in the Florentine chronicles from the twelfth century, and Michael Angelo was well aware of this. He knew his genealogy. "We are citizens of the noblest race," he wrote in a letter of December 1546, to his nephew Leonardo. He became indignant at the idea that his nephew should think of joining the ranks of the nobility. "You show a lack of self-respect," he said. "Every one knows that we belong to the old burgesses of Florence, and are as noble as any one." (February 1549.) He endeavoured to restore his family's fallen fortunes, to revive their old name of Simoni, and to establish a patrician house in Florence. But

lineage than of his genius even. He would not permit people to regard him as an artist. "I am not the sculptor Michael Angelo . . ." he said, "I am Michael Angelo Buonarroti. . . ."[1]

He was mentally an aristocrat and possessed all the prejudices of his caste. He even went so far as to say that "art ought to be exercised by nobles, not by plebeians."[2]

He had a religious, antique, almost barbarian conception of the family. He sacrificed everything to it and wished others to do the same. As he himself said, he would have "sold himself as a slave for its sake."[3] Affection had little to do with this. He despised his brothers, who well merited his scorn. He despised his nephew—his heir. But, as representatives of his family,

his plans were ever frustrated by his brothers' mediocrity. He blushed to think that one of them (Sigismondo) guided a plough and lived the life of a peasant. In 1520, Count Alessandro of Canossa wrote to him to say that in his family archives he had discovered the proof that they were related. The information was inaccurate, but Michael Angelo believed it, and wished to purchase the château of Canossa, the alleged cradle of his family. His biographer, Condivi, following his indications, included among his ancestors Beatrice, the sister of Henri II., and the great Comtesse Mathilde.

In 1515, on the occasion of the visit of Leo X. to Florence, Buonarroto, Michael Angelo's brother, was appointed *comes palatinus*, and the Buonarroti received the right to add to their arms the *palla* of the Medici, with three lilies and the Pope's monogram.

[1] "I have never, either as a painter or a sculptor," he continues, "made a trade of my art. I have always exercised it for the honour of my family." (Letter to Leonardo, May 2, 1548.)

[2] Condivi.

[3] Letter to his father, August 19, 1497. He was not "emancipated" by his father until March 13, 1508, at the age of thirty-three. (Official certificate registered on the following March 28.)

he respected them. We find these words continually recurring in his letters: "Our family . . . *la nostra gente* . . . uphold our family . . . so that our family die not. . . ."

He possessed all the superstitions and fanaticism of that rough, strong family. They were the dust from which his being was formed. But from that dust sprang the fire which purifies everything—genius.

He who does not believe in genius, who knows not what it is, let him look at Michael Angelo. Never before was man thus its prey. The genius which filled him did not seem to be of the same nature as he: it was like a conqueror who had rushed upon him and held him enslaved. His will in no way entered into it, and one might almost say the same of his mind and heart. It took the form of a frenzied enthusiasm—a formidable life in a body and soul too weak to hold it.

Michael Angelo lived in a state of continual enthusiasm. The suffering caused by the excess of strength with which he was, as it were, inflated forced him to act, to act ceaselessly, without an hour's repose. "I am wearing myself out with work as never man did before," he wrote. "I think of nothing else save working day and night."

This unhealthy craving for activity caused him not only to accumulate tasks and accept more commissions than he could execute—it degenerated into a mania. He wished to sculpture mountains. When he had a monument to build he wasted years in quarries, selecting his blocks of marble and making roads along which to carry them. He wanted to be everything—engineer, workman, stone-cutter; to do everything himself—build palaces and churches with no other aid than his own. His life resembled that of a convict. He did not grant himself

even the time for eating and sleeping. In his letters we are continually coming across the following lamentable refrain :

"I have hardly time to eat . . . I have no time to eat . . . For the past twelve years I have been ruining my body with fatigue. I stand in need of necessaries . . . I am without a penny. I am naked. I suffer a thousand ills . . . I live in a state of poverty and suffering . . . I struggle with poverty."[1]

Michael Angelo's poverty was imaginary. He was wealthy—he became, indeed, very wealthy.[2] But what use did he make of his riches ? He lived like a poor man, harnessed to his task like a horse to a millstone. No one could understand why he thus tortured himself. No one could understand that it was out of his power not to torture himself—that it was a necessity for him. Even his father—who had many of his son's traits—reproached him.

"Your brother tells me that you live with great economy and even in a wretched manner. Economy is good, but poverty is bad—it is a vice which displeases both God and man and will do harm to your soul and

[1] Letters of 1507, 1509, 1512, 1513, 1525, and 1547.

[2] After his death, there was found, at his house in Rome, from 7000 to 8000 gold ducats, equivalent to £16,000 to £20,000 of our money. Moreover, Vasari says that he had already given his nephew 7000 crowns, and his servant, Urbino, 2000. He had large sums invested in Florence. The *Denunzia de' beni* for 1534 shows that he then possessed six houses and seven estates in Florence, Settignano, Rovezzano, Stradello, San Stefano de Pozzolatico, and other places. He had a mania for possessing land, and was continually buying, as in 1505, 1506, 1512, 1515, 1517, 1518, 1519, 1520, &c. A trait this, transmitted from peasant ancestors. However, though he amassed wealth, it was not for himself that he did it ; he spent his riches on others and deprived himself of everything.

your body. As long as you are young, things will go fairly smoothly; but when you are no longer so, sicknesses and infirmities, which have had their origin in that bad and wretched life, will make their appearance. Avoid poverty, live with moderation, mind you do not stand in need of necessaries, and beware of excess of work."[1]

But counsel was ever without avail: never would he consent to treat himself in a more humane manner. A little bread and wine sufficed to nourish him. Barely a few hours were devoted to sleep. When at Bologna, occupied with the bronze statue of Julius II., he had only one bed for himself and his three assistants.[2] He lay down to rest fully dressed and booted. On one occasion his legs swelled so much that his boots had to be cut, and in removing them the skin of his limbs came with them.

As a result of this terrible life he was, as his father had prophesied, constantly ill. We find fourteen to fifteen serious illnesses mentioned in his letters.[3] More than once

[1] Some advice concerning hygiene, which shows the barbarousness of the times, follows. "Above all, take care of your head, keep yourself moderately warm, *and never wash yourself*. Have yourself cleaned, *and never wash yourself*." (Letters of December 19, 1500.)

[2] Letters, 1506.

[3] In September 1517, at the time he was working on the façade of San Lorenzo and the statue of Christ, in the Church of S. Maria Sopra Minerva, in Rome, he was "sick unto death." In the following year and in the same month, when at the Seravezza quarries, he fell ill through overwork and worry. He had a fresh illness in 1520, at the time of the death of Raphael. At the end of 1521, a friend, Leonardo Sellajo, congratulated him "on recovering from an illness from which few recover." In June 1531, after the capture of Florence, he could neither sleep nor eat: his head and heart were ailing; and he continued in this state until the end of the year, until his friends concluded

fever brought him near to death's door. He suffered in his eyes, teeth, head, and heart.[1] He was racked with neuralgia, especially when he had retired to rest, and thus sleep had become a torture to him. He became prematurely old. At forty-two years of age he had a sense of his decrepitude.[2] At forty-eight he wrote that for every day he worked he had to rest four.[3] He obstinately refused to accept the advice of a doctor.

His mind, even more than his body, suffered the consequences of this terrible life of work. Pessimism—a hereditary evil with him—consumed him. When in his youth he wore himself out in reassuring his father, who seems, at times, to have suffered from attacks of the mania of persecution.[4] But Michael Angelo himself was

he was doomed. In 1539 he fell from his scaffolding at the Sistine and broke his leg. In June 1544 he had a very serious attack of fever, and was nursed by his friend, Luigi del Riccio, at the house of the Strozzi, in Florence. In December 1545 and January 1546 he had a dangerous recurrence of this same fever, which left him in a very weak state. Riccio had again nursed him at the Strozzi's. In March 1549 he suffered cruelly from stone. In July 1555 he was tortured by gout. In July 1559 he was again suffering from stone and pains of all sorts, and was in a very weak condition. And in August 1561 he had an attack, "falling into unconsciousness, with convulsive movements."

[1] "*Febbre, fianchi dolor', morbi ochi e denti.*" (Poems, lxxxii.)

[2] July 1517. (Letter written from Carrara to Domenico Buoninsegni.)

[3] July 1523. (Letter to Bart. Angiolini.)

[4] In his letters to his father we are continually finding such phrases as the following: "Do not be uneasy . . ." (Spring 1509.) "It hurts me to think that you live in such a state of anguish; I beg and pray of you to think of this no longer." (January 27, 1509.) "Do not frighten yourself; be not in the slightest degree sad." (September 15, 1509.)

Old Buonarroti appears to have suffered, like his son, from fits of terror. In 1521 (as we shall read later), he suddenly

more affected than the one he sought to console. His ceaseless activity and overwhelming fatigue delivered him over without defence to all the aberrations of a mind which was filled with suspicions. He distrusted both his friends[1] and his enemies. He distrusted his parents, his brothers, and his adopted son, suspecting that they were impatiently waiting for his death.

Everything disquieted him.[2] Even the members of his own family made a mockery of his eternal disquietude.[3] As he himself said, he lived "in a state of melancholy, or rather of madness."[4] By dint of much suffering he ended by finding a sort of bitter pleasure in pain:

"E piu mi giova dove piu mi nuoce."[5]

fled from his own house, crying that his son had driven him forth.

[1] "In the sweetness of a perfect friendship, a menace to honour and life is often hid . . ." (Sonnet lxxiv. to his friend, Luigi del Riccio, who had just saved him from a serious illness, 1546.)

See the fine letter of justification which his faithful friend, Tommaso de' Cavalieri, whom he had unjustly suspected, wrote to him on November 15, 1561: "I am more than certain that I have never offended you, but you are too inclined to put your trust in those whom you ought to believe the least . . ."

[2] "I live in a continual state of distrust . . . Place not your confidence in any one; sleep with your eyes open. . . ."

[3] Letters of September and October 1515 to his brother Buonarroti: ". . . Do not laugh at what I write you . . . One ought not to mock at any one. In these days it does no harm to live in fear and disquietude for one's soul and body . . . It is good at all times to be disquieted. . . ."

[4] He often, in his letters, calls himself: "melancholy and mad," "old and mad," "mad and wicked." But elsewhere, having been reproached for his folly, he defends himself and alleges "that it never harmed any one but himself."

[5] "That which hurts me most pleases me the most." (Poems, xlii.)

Everything had become pain to him—even love[1] and even virtue.[2]

"La mia allegrez' è la maninconia."[3]

No being was ever less fitted for experiencing joy and better fitted for sorrow. It was sorrow alone which he saw—sorrow alone which he felt in the immense universe. The whole pessimism of the world is summed up in this sublimely unjust cry of despair:

"Mille piacer non vaglion un tormento!"[4]

"His devouring energy," says Condivi, "almost entirely separated him from all human society."

He stood alone. He hated and was hated. He loved but was not loved in return. He was admired and feared. In the end he inspired a religious respect. He dominated his century. He was then assuaged a little. He saw men from above, and they saw him from below. But never was he two men in one. Never did he know repose and the happiness which is accorded to the humblest of beings—that of being able, for one minute of his life, to fall asleep in the affection of another. A woman's love was refused him. Alone, for a moment, there shone in that solitary sky the cold, pure star of the friendship of

[1] "Che degli amanti è men felice stato
Quello ove 'l gran desir gran copia affrena
C'una miseria, di speranza piena."

"The fulness of pleasure which extinguishes desire is, to him who loves, less blissful than misery, which is full of hope." (Sonnet cix., 48.)

[2] "Everything saddens me," he wrote. . . . "Even virtue, on account of its too short duration, overwhelms and oppresses my soul no less than evil itself."

[3] "Melancholy—that is *my* joy." (Poems, lxxxi.)

[4] "A thousand joys are not as good as a single torment." (Poems, lxxxiv.)

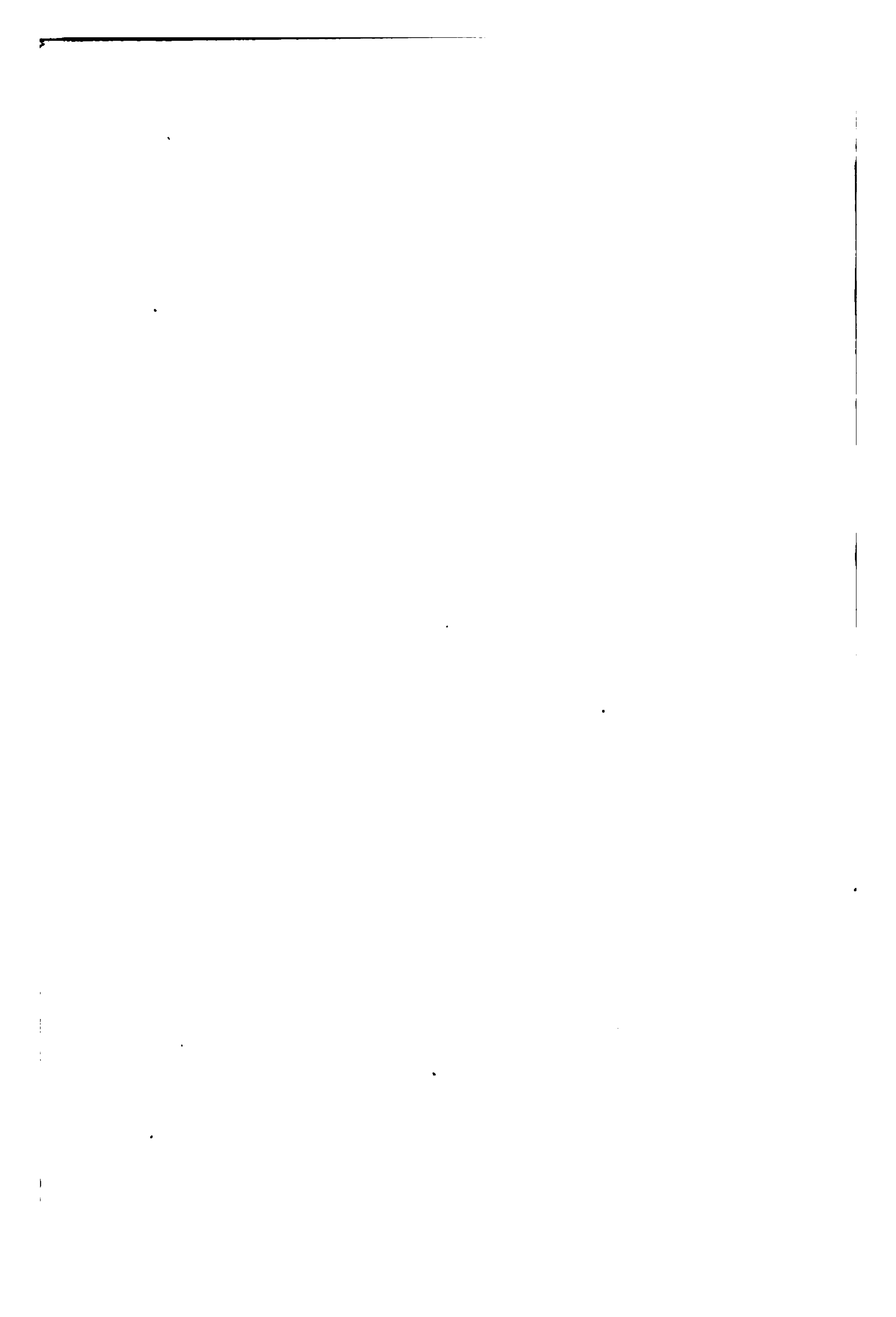
Vittoria Colonna. Everywhere around was the blackness of night, traversed by the glowing meteors of his thought: his desire and delirious dreams. Never did Beethoven know such a night as that. The reason is that this night was in Michael Angelo's very heart. Beethoven—naturally gay and inspiring after joy—was sad through the fault of the world. Michael Angelo's sadness, which provoked fear in men and made all instinctively flee, was part and parcel of his being.

But this was nothing. The ill consisted not in being alone but in being alone with himself, in being unable to live with himself, in not being master of himself, in disowning, combating and destroying himself. His genius was coupled with a soul which betrayed it. People sometimes speak of the fatality which relentlessly followed in his footsteps and prevented him carrying out any of his great projects. This fatality was himself. The secret of his misfortunes, that which explains the whole tragedy of his life (and this is what people have least seen or least dared to see), was his lack of will-power and weakness of character.

He was irresolute in art, in politics, in all his actions and in all his thoughts. Between two works, two projects, or two lines of conduct he was never able to choose. The history of the monument to Julius II., the façade of San Lorenzo, and the tombs of the Medici is proof of this. He began and began again, but never reached the end. He had barely made his choice than he began to doubt about it. At the end of his life he completed nothing: everything disgusted him. It has been alleged that his tasks were imposed upon him, and the responsibility of this perpetual wavering between one project and another has been laid on the shoulders of his masters. People forget that his masters had no means

TOMB OF GIULIANO DE' MEDICI

In the Medici Chapel, San Lorenzo, Florence



of imposing them upon him had he decided to refuse them. But he dare not.

He was weak. He was weak in all ways: through virtue and through timidity. He was weak through conscience. He tormented himself with a thousand scruples which a more energetic nature would have rejected. Through an exaggerated sense of responsibility he felt himself obliged to undertake mediocre tasks which any foreman could have done better.[1] He knew neither how to keep his engagements nor to forget them.[2]

He was weak through prudence and through fear. The man whom Julius II. called "the terrible"—"*il terribile*"—Vasari styles as "prudent"—too prudent; and he "who frightened everybody, even the Popes,"[3] had a fear of every one. He was weak with princes. And yet, who despised more than he did those who were weak with princes—"the pack-donkeys of princes," as he called them?[4] He wished to flee from the Popes, but he remained and obeyed.[5] He tolerated insulting letters from his masters, and replied to them humbly.[6] At times

[1] See the years which he spent in the Seravezza quarries for the façade of San Lorenzo.

[2] As in the case of the statue of Christ for the Church of S. Maria Sopra Minerva, the order for which he had accepted in 1514 and which he lamented was not yet begun in 1518. "I am dying with shame . . . I have the air of being a thief." As in the case, also, of the Piccolomini Chapel, in Sienna, for which, in 1501, he had signed a contract stipulating that he would deliver his work in three years. In 1561, sixty years later, he was still tormenting himself for not having kept his engagement.

[3] "Facte paura a ognuno insino a' papi" Sebastiano del Piombo wrote to him on October 27, 1520.

[4] Conversation with Vasari.

[5] As in 1534, when he wished to flee from Paul III. and ended by allowing himself to be chained to his task.

[6] Such as the humiliating letter from Cardinal Julius de'

he revolted and spoke up proudly, but he always gave way. Up to the day of his death he disputed, without strength for struggling. Clement VII., who—contrary to current opinion—was, of all the Popes, the one who showed most kindness towards him, knew his weakness and pitied him.[1]

In love he was wanting in all sense of dignity. He humiliated himself in the presence of rogues such as Febo di Poggio.[2] He treated an amiable but mediocre person like Tommaso de' Cavalieri as a "powerful genius."[3]

Love, at any rate, makes these weaknesses touching. But they are nothing less than sadly painful—one dare not say shameful—when they are inspired by fear. He was seized, from time to time, with sudden terrors, and would then, tracked by fear, flee from one end of Italy to the other. In 1494, terrified by a vision, he fled from Florence. He fled again in 1529 when Florence, with the defence of which he was charged, was besieged. He went as far as Venice and was on the point of escaping to France. Later he became ashamed of this mistake and

Medici (the future Clement VII.), on February 2, 1518, in which he expresses the suspicion that Michael Angelo has been bribed by the Carrarais. Michael Angelo bends the knee and replies "that the only thing in the world he cares for is to please him."

[1] See his letters and those which he had written by Sebastiano del Piombo after the taking of Florence. He inquires after his health and troubles. In 1531 he published a brief to defend him against the importunities of those who abused his kindness.

[2] Compare Michael Angelo's humble letter to Febo, of December 1533, to Febo's begging and vulgar reply of January 1534.

[3] ". . . If I do not possess the art of navigating on the sea of your powerful genius, you will excuse and not despise me, because I cannot compare myself to you. He who is unique in everything can have no equal." (Michael Angelo to Tommaso de' Cavalieri, January 1, 1533.)

repaired it by returning to the besieged city, where he did his duty until the end of the siege. But when Florence was taken, and proscription reigned, how weak and trembling he was! He even went so far as to pay court to Valori, the proscriber, who had just put his friend, the noble Battista della Palla, to death. Alas! He even went so far as disowning his friends the banished Florentines.[1]

He was frightened and mortally ashamed of his fear. He despised himself to such an extent that he fell ill. He wished to die, and it was believed that he was going to do so.[2]

But he could not die. A desperate force daily sprang up within him and kept him alive in order that he might

[1] ". . . Up to the present I have abstained from speaking or having intercourse with the banished. I shall take still greater care in the future . . . I speak to nobody. Above all, I do not speak with Florentines. If I am saluted in the street I cannot do anything else, however, than reply in a friendly manner. But I pass on. If I knew who the banished Florentines were I should respond in no manner whatsoever . . ." (Letter from Rome, in 1548, to his nephew Leonardo, who had informed him that he was accused in Florence of having relations with the banished, against whom Cosmo II. had just issued a very severe edict.)

He went much further than this. He disavowed the hospitality which, as a sick man, he had received at the Strozzi's:

"As to the reproach which they make against me, namely, that during my illness I was received and nursed at the house of the Strozzi, I consider that I was not under their roof, but in the room of Luigi del Riccio, who was much attached to me." (Luigi del Riccio was in the service of the Strozzi.) There was so little doubt that Michael Angelo had been the guest, not of Riccio, but of the Strozzi that he himself, two years before, had sent "The Two Slaves" (now in the Louvre) to Roberto Strozzi, in order to thank him for his hospitality.

[2] In 1531, after the taking of Florence, his submission to Clement VII. and his advances towards Valori.

suffer the more. If he could only, at least, have dragged himself from action! But that was forbidden him. He could not do without acting. He acted. It was necessary for him to act. He acted?—Rather was he acted upon, carried away, like one of the damned souls of Dante, by the cyclone of his violent and contradictory passions.

How he must have suffered!

> "Oilme, oilme, pur reiterando
> Vo' l mio passato tempo e non ritruovo
> In tucto un giorno che sie stato mio."[1]

He addressed despairing appeals to God:

> ". . . O Dio, o Dio, o Dio!
> Chi piu di me potessi, che poss' io?"[2]

The reason why he craved for death was that he saw it would bring an end to his maddening slavery. With what envy he spoke of those who were dead!

"You no longer feel the fear of a change of being and desire . . . The course of the hours lays not violent hands upon you; necessity and chance guide not your steps . . . I can hardly write without envy."[3]

To die! To be no longer! No longer to be oneself! To break away from the tyranny of things! To escape from the hallucination of oneself!

[1] "Woe is me! Woe is me! In all my past I find not a single day which I can call my own!" (Poems, xlix. Probably written about 1532).

[2] "Oh, God! oh, God! oh, God! Who can do more for me than I myself?" (Poems, vi. Between 1504 and 1511).

[3] . . . .
Ne tem' or piu cangiar vita ne voglia,
Che quasi senza invidia non lo scrivo . . .
L'oro distinte a voi non fanno forza,
Caso o necessita non vi conduce . . .
(Poems, lviii. On the death of his father, 1534.)

"Ah! grant; oh! grant that I no longer return to myself."[1]

I can hear that tragic cry issuing from the sorrowful face whose anxious eyes still look at us in the Museum of the Capitol.[2]

He was of medium stature, broad-shouldered, strongly built and muscular. His body deformed by work, he walked with raised head, hollowed out back and protruding stomach. So do we see him in a portrait by Francis of Holland—a portrait in which he is represented upright, in profile and dressed in black: a Roman cloak over his shoulders, a piece of stuff on his head, and, on the top of it, well pulled down, a large black felt hat.[3] He had a round skull, a square forehead, swollen over the eyes and lined with wrinkles. His hair was black, by no means thick, dishevelled and becurled. His small,[4] sad, strong eyes were horn-coloured, variable, and speckled with yellow and blue. His big, straight nose, with a bump in the middle, had been broken by a blow from Torrigiani's fist.[5] He had deep lines from the nostrils to the corners of the lips. His mouth was delicate, with

[1] "De fate, c'a me stesso piu non torni." (Poems, cxxxv. On the death of his father, 1534.)

[2] The description which follows is inspired by various portraits of Michael Angelo, especially by that of Marcello Venusti at the Capitol, by Francis of Holland's engraving, which dates from 1538–1539, and by that of Guilio Bonasoni, which is of 1546 Use has also been made of Condivi's account of 1553. His disciple and friend, Daniello da Volterra, and his servant, Antonio del Franzese, made several busts of him after his death.

[3] Thus did those who opened his coffin in 1564, when his body was brought from Rome to Florence, still find him. He appeared to be asleep, with his felt hat on his head and his spurred boots on his feet.

[4] Condivi. Venusti's portrait represents them as fairly large.

[5] About 1490–1492.

the lower lip slightly protruding. Scanty side-whiskers and a somewhat thin, cloven, faunlike beard, some four or five inches long, enframed his hollow cheeks and protruding cheek-bones.

Sadness and indecision dominated in the *ensemble* of his physiognomy. It was indeed a face of the days of Tasso—an anxious face, consumed by doubts. His poignant eyes inspired and called for compassion.

Do not let us be sparing with it. Let us hold out to him the love to which he aspired the whole of his life and which was refused him. He experienced the greatest misfortunes which can fall to the lot of man. He saw his country in bondage. He saw Italy delivered for centuries into the hands of barbarians. He saw the death of liberty. He saw those whom he loved disappear one after the other. One after the other he saw all the luminaries of art pass away.

The last of them all, he remained alone in the gathering night. And, on the threshold of death, when he looked behind him, he had not even the consolation of saying that he had accomplished everything he ought, everything he might have done. His life seemed to him to have been wasted. It had been without joy—in vain. In vain he had sacrificed it to the idol of art.[1]

The preternatural work to which he had been condemned during ninety years of life, without a day's repose or a day of real life, had not even served for the carrying out of a single one of his great projects. Not one of his great works—those which he held most dear—was com-

[1] ". . . L'affectuosa fantasia,
Che l'arte mi fece idol' e monarca, . . ."
(Poems, cxlvii. Between 1555 and 1556.)
"Impassioned illusion, which made me make art into an idol and a monarch . . ."

pleted. The irony of fate ordained that this sculptor[1] should only succeed in completing his paintings, which were executed against his real desire. Among his big undertakings, which had alternately produced so many proud hopes and mental sufferings, some—such as the Cartoon of Pisa and the bronze statue of Julius II.—were destroyed during his lifetime; whilst others—such as the mausoleum of Julius II. and the Medici Chapel—piteously failed: caricatures of his thought.

In the "Commentaries" of the sculptor Ghiberti there is related the story of a poor German goldsmith, in the service of the Duke of Anjou, "who was the equal of the sculptors of Ancient Greece, and who, at the end of his days, saw all the work to which he had devoted his life destroyed. He then saw that all his labour had been in vain, and, throwing himself on his knees, he cried: 'O Lord, Master of heaven and earth, Thou who makest all things, allow me no longer to stray afield and follow other than Thee. Have pity on me!' And immediately he gave all he possessed to the poor, retired to a hermitage and died. . . ."

Like the poor German goldsmith, Michael Angelo, having reached the end of his life, bitterly contemplated his useless efforts, his uncompleted, destroyed and unaccomplished works.

Then, he abdicated. The pride of the Renaissance, the magnificent pride of the free and sovereign soul of the universe took refuge with him "in that divine love which, in receiving us, opens its arms upon the Cross."

[1] He called himself a "sculptor," not a "painter." "To-day," he wrote on March 10, 1508, "I, Michael Angelo, sculptor, began the painting of the Chapel (Sistine)." "This is not my profession," he wrote a year later . . . "I am uselessly wasting my time." (January 27, 1509.) He never varied on this point.

". . . Volta a quell' amor divino
C'aperse a prender noi 'n croce le braccia."[1]

The fruitful cry of the "Ode to Joy" was not uttered. Until his last breath it was an Ode to Sorrow and to Death which delivers. The conquest was complete.

Such was one of the world's conquerors. We who enjoy the works of his genius do so in the same manner as we enjoy the conquests of our ancestors: we make no reckoning of the blood which they have cost.

"Non vi si pensa
Quanto sangue costa."[2]

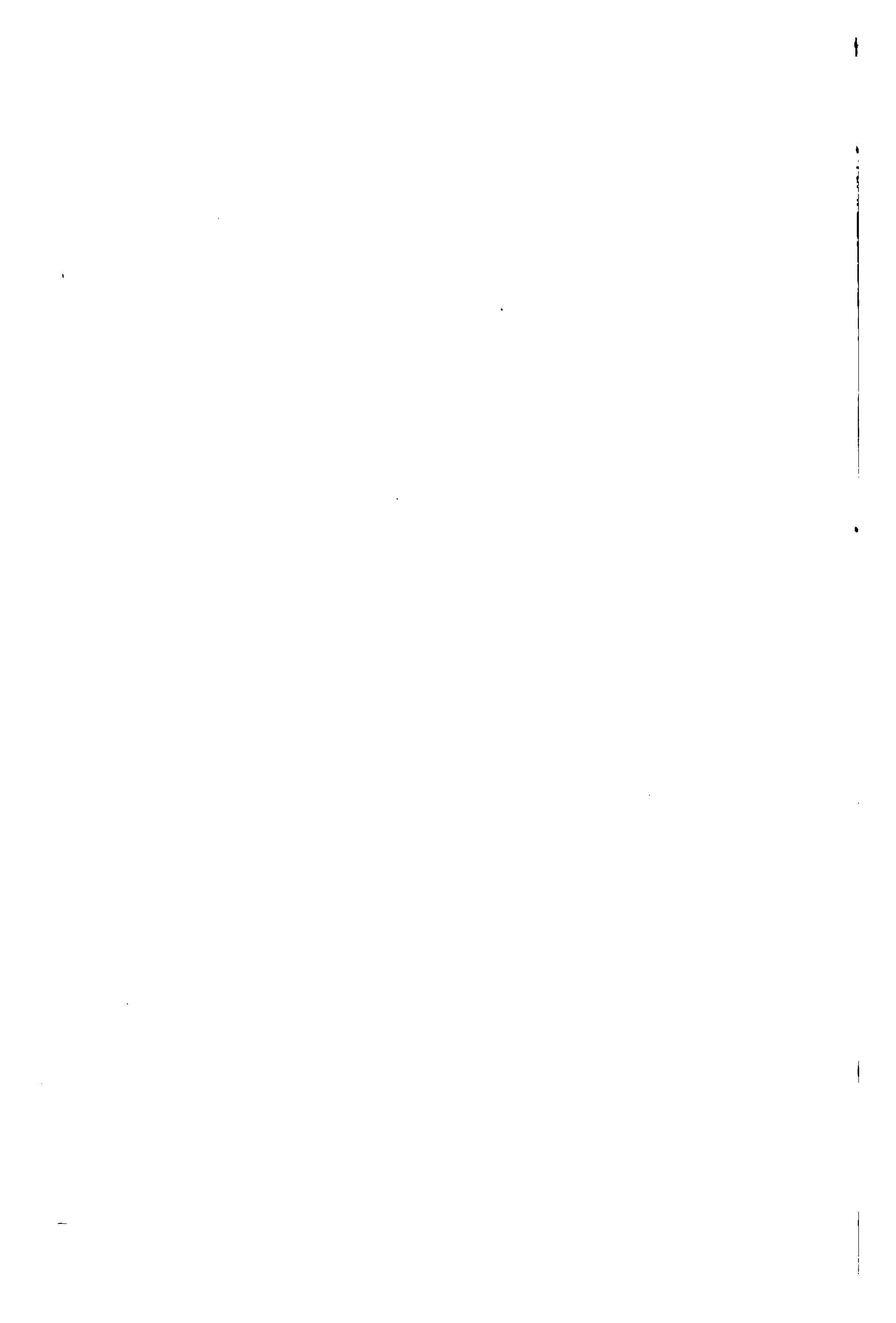
My desire has been to display this blood to the eyes of all, to wave above our heads the red standard of heroes.

[1] Poems, cxlvii.

[2] Dante: "La Divina Commèdia." (Paradise, xxix. 91.)

PART I

THE STRUGGLE



I

STRENGTH

"Davide cholla fromba
e io choll'archo"
—Michael Angelo.[1]

He was born on March 6, 1475, at Caprese, in the Casentino—a rugged country of rocks and beech-trees and "pure air"[2] which dominates the backbone of the bony Apennines. Not far away, on Mount Alvernia, St. Francis of Assisi beheld his vision of the crucified Christ.

The father[3]—a violent, restless, "God-fearing" man—was podestat, or resident magistrate, of Caprese and Chiusi. The mother[4] died when Michael Angelo was six years of age.[5] They had five sons—Leonardo, Michelagniolo, Buonarroto, Giovan Simone and Sigismondo.[6]

[1] Poems, i. (Written on a page of drawings in the Louvre, near to the sketches for his "David.")

[2] Michael Angelo was fond of saying that he owed his genius to "the pure air of the district of Arezzo."

[3] Lodovico di Leonardo Buonarroti Simone. The real name of the family was Simoni.

[4] Francesca di Neri di Miniato del Sera.

[5] A few years later, in 1485, the father remarried with Lucrezia Ubaldini, who died in 1497.

[6] Leonardo was born in 1473; Buonarroto in 1477; Giovan Simone in 1479; Sigismondo in 1481. Leonardo became a monk. Michael Angelo thus became the eldest, the head of the family.

He was put to nurse with the wife of a marble-worker of Settignano. Later, he jokingly attributed his vocation as a sculptor to his foster-mother's milk. Sent to school, he spent nearly the whole of his time drawing. "For this reason he was regarded with displeasure and often cruelly struck by his father and his father's brother, who had a hatred for the artistic profession and considered it a scandal to have an artist in the family."[1] Thus, whilst still a child, he came to know the brutality of life and the solitude of the mind.

His obstinacy prevailed over that of his father. At the age of thirteen he became an apprentice in the *bottega* of Domenico Ghirlandajo—the greatest and healthiest of Florentine painters. His early works were so successful that the master, it is said, was jealous of his pupil.[2] At the end of a year they separated.

He took a dislike to painting, and, aspiring to a more heroic art, entered the school of sculpture which Lorenzo de' Medici had established in the gardens of St. Mark.[3] The prince interested himself in him, lodged him in his palace and admitted him to his sons' table; and thus the child found himself at the very heart of the Italian Renaissance, in the midst of ancient collections, in the poetic and erudite atmosphere of those great Platonists Marsile Ficino, Benivieni, and Angelo Politiano. He became enraptured with their understanding. In order to live in the ancient world he cultivated an ancient soul and became a Greek sculptor. Guided by Politiano, "who loved him greatly," he carved a basso-relievo in

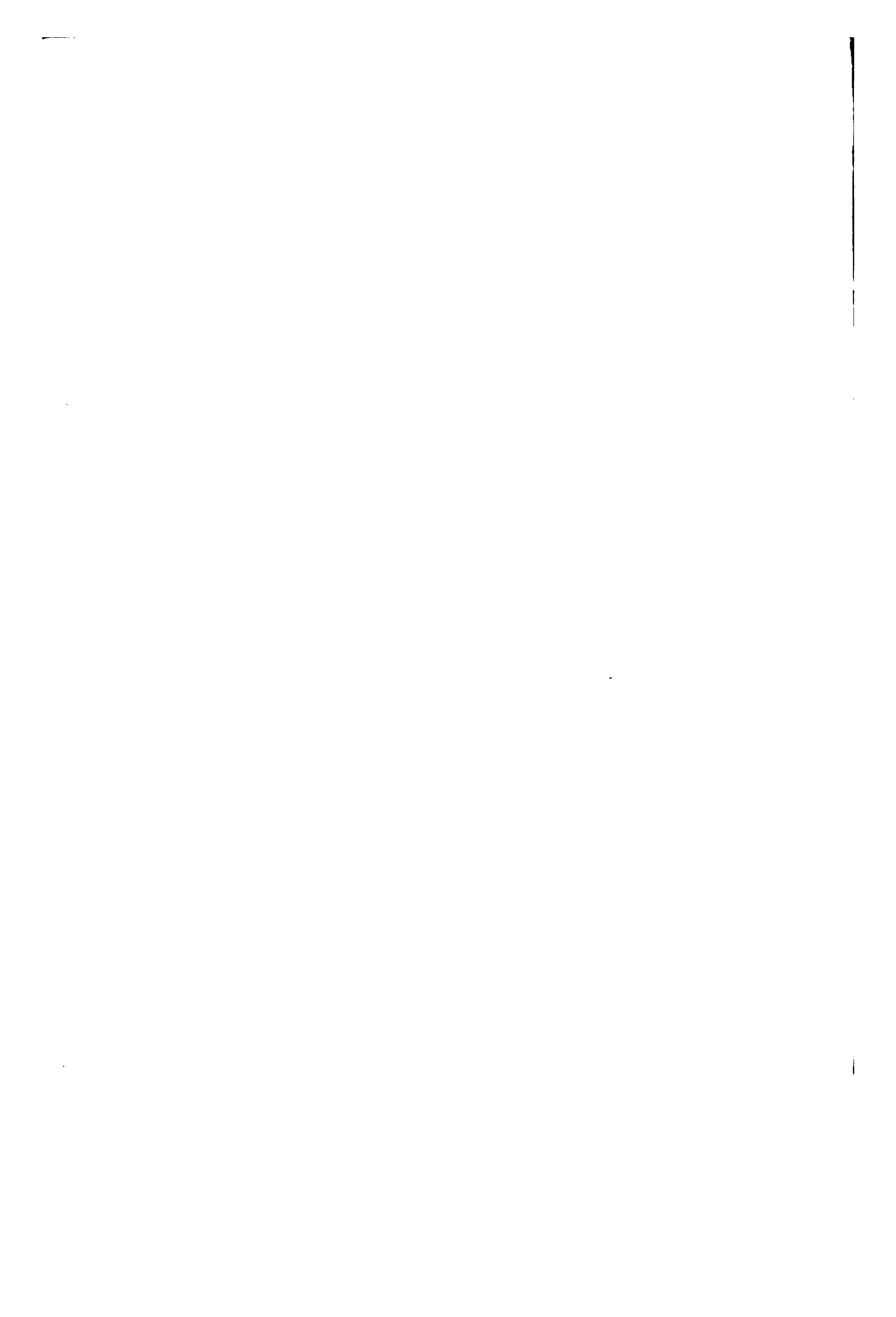
[1] Condivi.

[2] Truth to tell, it is difficult to believe that so powerful an artist would have been jealous. At all events, I do not believe that this was the cause of Michael Angelo's precipitous departure. He preserved, until his old age, the respect of his first master.

[3] The school was directed by Bertoldo, a pupil of Donatello.

THE BATTLE OF THE CENTAURS

Unfinished bas-relief in the Galleria Buonarroti, Florence



marble representing the battle of Hercules with the Centaurs.[1]

This arrogant low-relief, in which impassable strength and beauty reign supreme, reflects the athletic soul of the young Hercules and his fierce games with his rough companions.

Michael Angelo, accompanied by Lorenzo di Credi, Bugiardini, Granacci and Torrigiano dei Torrigiani, also went to the church of the Carmelites to copy Masaccio's frescoes. He was not sparing with the railleries which he addressed to his less skilful comrades. One day he attacked the vain Torrigiani, whereupon Torrigiani gave him a crushing blow on the face with his fist. Later he boasted of the fact to Benvenuto Cellini, in the following words: "I gave him so violent a blow upon the nose with my fist that I felt the bone and cartilage yield under my hand as if they had been made of paste, and the mark I then gave him he will carry to his grave."[2]

But paganism had not stifled Michael Angelo's Christian faith. The two hostile worlds disputed over his soul.

In 1490, Savonarola began his impassioned sermons on the Apocalypse. He was thirty-seven years of age. Michael Angelo was fifteen. The young artist saw the small, frail preacher, who was consumed by the Spirit of God, and the terrible voice which hurled thunderbolts on the Pope from the pulpit in the Duomo and suspended the bloody sword of God over Italy froze him with terror. Florence trembled. People rushed about the streets

[1] The "Battle of Hercules with the Centaurs" is at the Casa Buonarroti in Florence. Belonging to the same period are two other works: The "Mask of a Laughing Faun," which brought Michael Angelo Lorenzo de' Medici's friendship, and the "Madonna of the Staircase," another low-relief of the Casa Buonarroti.

[2] This incident occurred about 1491.

weeping and shouting like demented beings. The wealthiest citizens—the Ruccellais, the Salviatis, the Albizzis, and the Strozzis—demanded to enter into Orders. Learned men and philosophers, including Pic de la Mirandole and Politiano, themselves abdicated.[1] Michael Angelo's elder brother Leonardo became a Dominican.[2]

Michael Angelo did not escape this contagious terror. When he whom the prophet had announced approached —the new Cyrus, the sword of God, the little deformed monster, Charles VIII., King of France—he was panic-stricken. A dream threw his mind off its balance.

One of his friends, Cardiere, a poet and musician, saw, one night, the shade of Lorenzo de' Medici,[3] with his half-naked body wrapped in a black tattered robe. The dead man commanded him to tell his son Piero that shortly he would be driven from his house never again to return. Michael Angelo, to whom Cardiere confided the story of his vision, exhorted him to relate everything to the prince; but the poet, who was frightened of Piero,

[1] They died shortly afterwards, in 1494. Politiano requested to be buried as a Dominican at the Church of St. Mark—Savonarola's church. When about to die Pic de la Mirandole put on the dress of a Dominican.

[2] In 1491.

[3] Lorenzo de' Medici had died on April 8, 1492, and was succeeded by his son, Piero. Michael Angelo then left the palace and returned to his father's, where he remained for some time without employment. Taking him into his service again, Piero charged him with the purchase of cameos and intaglios. His next piece of work was a colossal Hercules in marble, which, after being at the Strozzi Palace, was purchased in 1529 by Francis I. and placed at Fontainebleau, where, in the seventeenth century, it disappeared. The "Crucifix de Bois" of the Convent of San Spirito, in the making of which Michael Angelo studied anatomy on dead bodies to such an extent that he fell ill (1494), also belongs to this period.

dare not. On one of the following mornings he again sought out Michael Angelo and, full of terror, told him that Lorenzo had once more appeared to him. He was wearing the same costume, and as Cardiere, who was lying down, looked at him in silence, the phantom had boxed his ears, as a punishment for not having obeyed him. Michael Angelo then warmly reproved his friend and forced him, there and then, to set off on foot to the villa of the Medici family, at Careggi, near Florence. When half way on his journey Cardiere met Piero, stopped him and related his story. Piero burst into laughter and had him belaboured by his attendants. The prince's chancellor, Bibbiena, said to him: "You are out of your mind. Whom do you think Lorenzo loves best, his son or you? If his son, would he not rather have appeared to him than to any other person, if it had been necessary to appear at all?" Cardiere, lashed and scoffed at, returned to Florence, informed Michael Angelo of the failure of his journey, and so convinced him on the subject of the misfortunes which were going to overtake Florence that, two days later, the sculptor fled.[1]

This was the first attack of those superstitious terrors which occurred more than once in the course of his life and which, however ashamed he might be of them, threw him into consternation.

He fled as far as Venice.

Hardly had he left the fiery atmosphere of Florence

[1] Condivi. Michael Angelo's flight took place in October 1494. A month later Piero de' Medici fled in his turn, before a rising of the people, and a popular government was established in Florence, with the support of Savonarola, who prophesied that the city would carry the Republic throughout the world. This Republic recognised, however, a king—Jesus Christ.

than his excessive excitement subsided. Returning to Bologna, where he spent the winter,[1] he entirely forgot the prophet and his prophecies. The beauty of the world once more claimed his attention. He read Petrarca, Boccaccio and Dante. In the spring of 1495, during the Shrovetide religious *fêtes*, and the fierce struggle of rival parties, he returned to Florence. But he was now so detached from the passions which raged around him that, as a sort of reply to the fanaticism of the followers of Savonarola, he carved his famous "Sleeping Cupid," which his contemporaries mistook for an antique. He remained, however, but a few months in Florence; he went to Rome, and until the death of Savonarola he was the most pagan of artists. He produced a Bacchus, an Adonis, and the large Cupid the very year of Savonarola's Bonfire of Vanities—books, ornaments and works of ar [2] His brother, the monk Leonardo, was being prosecuted for his faith in the prophet. Danger was hanging over Savonarola's head. But Michael Angelo did not return to Florence to defend him. Savonarola was burnt,[3] but Michael Angelo remained silent. Not a trace of this event is to be found in any of his letters.

[1] He was the guest of the nobleman, Giovanni Francesco Aldovrandi, who, on the occasion of certain troubles which he had with the police of Bologna, came to his assistance. He was then working on the statue of San Petronio and a statuette of an angel for the tabernacle (*Arca*) of San Domenico. But these works are in no way religious in their character. Arrogant strength still prevailed in his work.

[2] Michael Angelo arrived in Rome in June 1496. The "Bacchus Drunk," the "Dying Adonis" (Bargello Museum), and the "Cupid" (South Kensington) are of 1497. He also seems to have drawn at this time the cartoon for a "Stigmatisation of St. Francis" for the Church of San Pietro in Montorio.

[3] May 23, 1498.

PIETA

St. Peter's, Rome

Michael Angelo remained silent, but he produced "La Pietà."[1]

On the knees of the Virgin—immortally young—the dead Christ is lying, and seems asleep. The severity of Olympus hovers on the features of the pure goddess and of the God of Calvary. But an indescribable melancholy is mingled with it and envelops these beautiful bodies. Sadness had taken possession of Michael Angelo's soul.

It was not merely the sight of wretchedness and crime which had thrown a gloom over him. A tyrannical force had taken possession of him and was never to set him free. He was a prey to that genial passion which was to stifle him until the day of his death. Without having any illusions as regards the victory, he had sworn to conquer for the sake of his own glory and that of his kindred. The whole weight of his heavy family rested on his shoulders alone. He was beset with demands for money. Money was none too plentiful, but ever to refuse wounded his pride: he would have sold himself in order to send his family the sums they demanded. Already his health

[1] It has always been stated up to the present that "La Pietà" was executed for the French Cardinal, Jean de Groslaye de Villiers, Abbot of St. Denis and Ambassador of Charles VIII., and that he ordered it of Michael Angelo for the Chapel of the Kings of France at St. Peter's. (Contract of August 27, 1498.) But M. Charles Samaran, in a work on "La Maison d'Armagnac au XVe siècle," has proved that the French cardinal who commissioned the work was Jean de Bilhères, Abbot of Pessan, Bishop of Lombez, and Abbot of St. Denis. Michael Angelo worked on it until 1501.

A conversation between Michael Angelo and Condivi explains, by a thought full of chivalrous mysticism, the youth of the Virgin, so different from the rude and blighted Mater Dolorosa, convulsed by sorrow, of Donatello, Signorelli, Mantegna, and Botticelli.

had begun to deteriorate. Poor food, cold, damp and overwork had begun to ruin him. He suffered in his head and had a swollen side.[1] His father reproached him for the manner in which he lived: he did not mention that he was responsible for it.

"All the hardships which I have endured, I have endured for you," wrote Michael Angelo to him later.[2] ". . . All my cares, all of them, I have suffered through my love for you." [3]

In the spring of 1501 he returned to Florence.

Forty years before, a gigantic block of marble had been entrusted by the Opera del Duomo to Agostino di Duccio to make the figure of a prophet. The work—hardly commenced—had been interrupted and no one dare continue it. Michael Angelo took it in hand[4] and transformed the ill-shapen block into a colossal statue of David.

It is related that the gonfaloniere Pier Soderini, on coming to see this statue, which he had ordered from Michael Angelo, addressed a few critical remarks to him, in order to show his taste: he pretended to discover that the nose was a little too large. Whereupon Michael Angelo mounted the scaffolding, took a chisel and a little marble dust, and, whilst lightly moving the chisel, allowed the dust to fall, little by little. But he took very good care not to touch the nose and left it as it was. Then, turning towards the gonfaloniere, he said:

[1] Letter from his father, December 19, 1500.

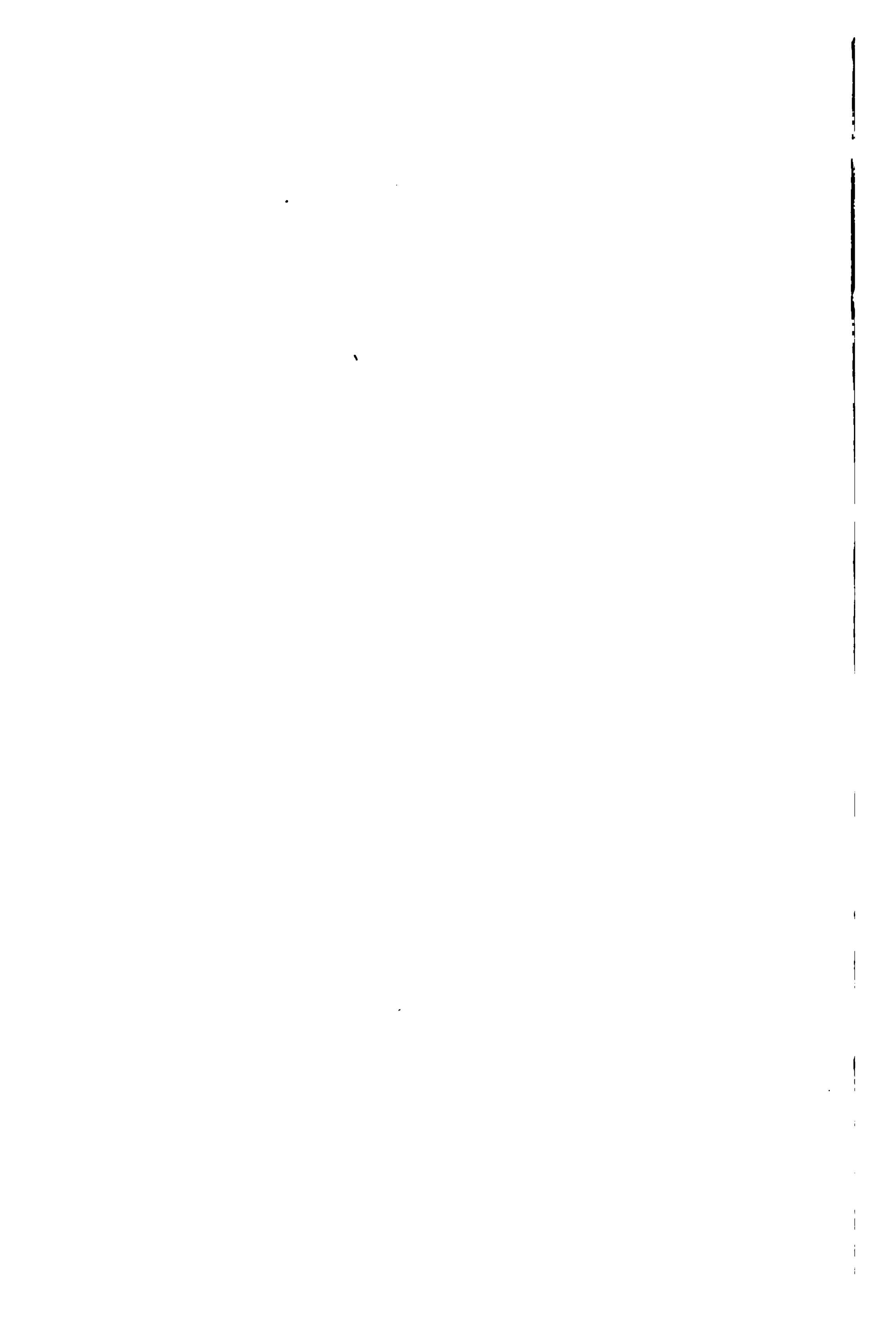
[2] Letter to his father, spring 1509.

[3] Letter to his father, 1521.

[4] In August 1501. A few months earlier he had signed with Cardinal Francesco Piccolomini a contract (which he never carried out) for the decoration of the Piccolomini altar at the Cathedral of Sienna. The breaking of this engagement caused him remorse during the whole of his life.

DAVID

Academy of Fine Arts, Florence



"Look now."

"Now," replied Soderini, "it pleases me much better. You have given it life."

Michael Angelo then descended, laughing silently.[1]

We can imagine we can read the sculptor's silent contempt in this work. It represents tumultuous strength at rest. It is, as it were, swollen with disdain and melancholy. It is smothered within the walls of a museum. It requires the open air, "the light on the square," as Michael Angelo once put it.[2]

On January 25, 1504, a committee of artists, including Filippino Lippi, Botticelli, Perugino and Leonardo da Vinci, deliberated over the question of the site for the "David." At the request of Michael Angelo they decided to place it in front of the Palazzo Vecchio.[3] The removal of the enormous block was entrusted to the architects of the Cathedral. On the evening of May 14 the marble colossus was brought out from the wooden construction where it was kept, a wall above a door being demolished in doing so. During the night the populace attempted to shatter it with stones and it had to be strongly guarded. Slowly the huge statue—suspended in an

[1] Vasari.

[2] "Don't give yourself so much trouble," said Michael Angelo to a sculptor who was striving to arrange the light in his studio, in order that his work might appear to advantage, "the great essential is the light on the square."

[3] The account of the deliberations has been preserved. (Milanesi: "Contratti Artistici," pp. 620 *et seq.*) The "David" remained on the spot which had been fixed for it in front of the Palace of the Seigniory until 1873. As the rain had damaged the statue in an alarming manner, it was then removed to a special rotunda (the "Tribuna del David") at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence. The "Circolo Artistico" of that city is now proposing (1908) to have a white marble copy made and erected on its old site opposite the Palazzo Vecchio.

upright position, so that it could swing freely without striking the ground—advanced. It took four days to move it from the Duomo to the Old Palace. On the 18th, at noon, it reached its destination. They continued to keep a guard around it at night, but, one evening, in spite of all precautions, it was stoned.[1]

Such was that Florentine people who are sometimes held up to us as a model.[2]

In 1504 the Seigniory of Florence pitted Michael Angelo against Leonardo da Vinci.

The two men were not fond of each other. Their common solitude ought to have brought them together. But if they felt that they were far removed from the rest of men, they were still more distant the one from the other. The more isolated of the two was Leonardo. He was fifty-two years of age—twenty years Michael Angelo's senior. Since the age of thirty he had been absent from Florence, the bitterness of whose passions was intolerable to his somewhat timid and delicate nature, to his serene and sceptical intellect, open to everything and understanding everything. This great *dilettante*, this man absolutely free and absolutely alone, was so detached from native country, religion and the entire world that he was only at his ease when with tyrants, who, like himself, were free minded. Forced to leave Milan in 1499, owing to the fall of his protector, Lodovico il Moro,

[1] Contemporary narrative and Pietro di Marco Parenti's 'Florentine Stories."

[2] Let me add that the chaste nudity of the "David" shocked the Florentines. Aretino, reproaching Michael Angelo with the indecency of his "Last Judgment," wrote to him in 1545 : "Imitate the modesty of the Florentines, who hide under leaves of gold the shameful parts of their beautiful Colossus."

he had entered the service, in 1502, of Cæsar Borgia; but the end of the political career of that prince obliged him, in the following year, to return to Florence. There his ironical smile was to be observed side by side with the melancholy, feverish nature of Michael Angelo, and it exasperated the sculptor. Michael Angelo, absorbed in his passions and his faith, hated the enemies of his passions and his faith, but he hated much more those who were without passion and belonged to no faith at all. The greater Leonardo was the more Michael Angelo felt an aversion for him; and he let no opportunity slip of showing it.

"Leonardo was a handsome man with engaging and distinguished manners. One day he was sauntering with a friend in the streets of Florence. He was dressed in a pink tunic, reaching to his knees, and his well-curled, artistically arranged beard floated on his breast. Near Santa Trinità a group of citizens were discussing a passage in Dante. Calling Leonardo to them, they begged him to explain the meaning. At that moment Michael Angelo was passing. Leonardo said: 'Michael Angelo here will explain the verses of which you speak.' Michael Angelo, thinking that he wished to laugh at him, replied bitterly: 'Explain them yourself, you who made the model of a bronze horse,[1] and who, incapable of casting it, left it unfinished—to your shame be it said!' Thereupon he turned his back on the group and continued on his way. Leonardo remained and reddened. And Michael Angelo, not yet satisfied and burning with a desire to hurt him, cried: 'And those thieves the Milanese who thought you capable of such a work!'"[2]

[1] An allusion to the equestrian statue of Francesco Sforza, which Leonardo left unfinished, and the plaster model of which the Gascon archers of Louis XII. used as a mark.

[2] Narrative of a contemporary.

Such were the two men whom the gonfaloniere Soderini set in opposition over a common work: the decoration of the Council Chamber of the Palace of the Seigniory. A singular combat this between the two greatest forces of the Renaissance! In May 1504 Leonardo began his cartoon of the "Battle of Anghiari."[1] In August 1504 Michael Angelo received a commission for the cartoon of the "Battle of Cascina."[2] Florence was divided into two camps. Time has equalised everything—both works have disappeared.[3]

In March 1505 Michael Angelo was summoned to Rome by Julius II. Then began the heroic period of his life.

Both of them violent and majestic, the Pope and the artist were made to agree, when they did not violently

[1] They imposed upon him the humiliation of representing a victory of the Florentines over his friends the Milanese.

[2] Or the "War of Pisa."

[3] Michael Angelo's cartoon, the only one completed in 1505, disappeared in 1512, on the occasion of the riots which arose in Florence through the return of the Medicis. The work is now known only by means of fragmentary copies, the most famous of these being Marc Antonio's engraving, "The Climbers." As to Leonardo's fresco, the painter himself destroyed it. Wishing to perfect the technique of the fresco, he experimented with a plaster which had oil as its basis, and which failed to last; and thus the painting, which, in his discouragement, he abandoned in 1506, no longer existed in 1550.

To this period of Michael Angelo's life (1501–1505) also belong the two circular bas-reliefs of the "Madonna and the Child," which are at the Royal Academy in London and at the Bargello Gallery in Florence; the "Madonna of Bruges," purchased in 1506 by Flemish merchants; and the large picture in distemper of the "Holy Family" in the Uffizi, the finest and most carefully finished of Michael Angelo's works. Its Puritanical austerity and heroic accent is a striking contrast to the effeminate languor of the art of Leonardo.

THE HOLY FAMILY

In the Uffizi, Florence

run counter to each other. Their brains were full of gigantic projects. Julius II. wished to build for himself a mausoleum worthy of Ancient Rome. Michael Angelo seized upon this proud and imperial idea with passionate enthusiasm, and conceived a Babylonian project—a very mountain of architecture with more than forty statues of colossal dimensions. The Pope, equally enthusiastic, despatched him to Carrara to obtain all the necessary marble. Michael Angelo remained in the mountains more than eight months. He was a prey to superhuman excitement. "One day, whilst riding through the country on horseback, he saw a mountain which dominated the coast, and was seized with a desire to carve it in its entirety, to transform it into a Colossus visible to navigators from afar . . . He would have done it had he had the time and been permitted."[1]

In December 1505 he returned to Rome, where the blocks of marble which he had chosen had begun to arrive by sea. They were transported on to the square of St. Peter, behind Santa Caterina, where Michael Angelo lived. "The mass of stone was so great that it excited the astonishment of the people and the joy of the Pope." Michael Angelo set to work. The Pope, in his impatience, came to see him ceaselessly "and conversed with him as familiarly as though he had been his own brother." In order to visit him more conveniently he had a draw-bridge, which assured him a secret passage, thrown from a corridor of the Vatican to Michael Angelo's house.

But the Pope's favour lasted only a short time. The character of Julius II. was no less inconstant than that of Michael Angelo. He became interested in the most dissimilar projects one after the other. Another plan—that of the rebuilding of St. Peter's—appeared to him to

[1] Condivi.

be more fitted to perpetuate his glory. He was urged to this by Michael Angelo's enemies, who were numerous and powerful. They were headed by a man whose genius was equal to that of Michael Angelo and who possessed a stronger will—Bramante d'Urbino, the Pope's architect and the friend of Raphael. There could not possibly be sympathy between the sovereign intellect of the two great Umbrians and the fierce genius of the Florentine. But if it is true that they decided to oppose him[1] it was doubtless because he had provoked them. Michael Angelo imprudently criticised Bramante, and accused him, whether rightly or wrongly, of malversation in his work.[2] Bramante immediately decided to ruin him.

He robbed him of the Pope's favour. Playing upon Julius' superstitious nature he reminded him of the

[1] At any rate, Bramante. Raphael was too close a friend of Bramante and too much under an obligation to him to refuse to make common cause with him; but we have no proof that, personally, he acted against Michael Angelo. Nevertheless, the sculptor accuses him in formal terms: "All the difficulties which arose between the Pope Julius and myself were the result of the jealousy of Bramante and Raphael. They sought to ruin me; and truly Raphael had reason for doing so, for what he knows in art he learnt from me." (Letter of October 1542 to a person unknown. Letters, Milanesi's edition, pp. 489-494).

[2] Condivi, whose blind friendship for Michael Angelo renders him somewhat open to suspicion, says: "Bramante was impelled to harm Michael Angelo first of all through jealousy, but also owing to a fear of the judgment of Michael Angelo, who discovered his errors. Bramante, as every one knows, was given to pleasure and great dissipation. The salary which he received from the Pope, large though it was, was insufficient for him, so he sought to make money by building his walls of bad materials and insufficiently solid. Every one can see this in his buildings at St. Peter's, the corridor of the Belvedere, the cloister of Santo Pietro ad Vincula, &c., which it has recently been necessary to support by means of cramp-irons and buttresses, because they were falling or would soon have fallen."

popular belief that it was unlucky to build one's tomb during one's lifetime. And he succeeded not only in detaching him from his rival's projects but in substituting his own for them. In January 1506 Julius II. decided to rebuild St. Peter's. The mausoleum was abandoned, and Michael Angelo found himself not only humiliated but indebted for the expenses which he had incurred for the work.[1] He complained bitterly. The Pope closed his door to him, and, on the sculptor returning to the charge, Julius had him driven from the Vatican by one of his grooms.

A bishop of Lucca, who witnessed the scene, said to the man:

"Are you aware as to who this is?"

"Pardon me, sir," said the groom to Michael Angelo, "but I have an order not to let you enter, and it is my duty to obey my orders."

Returning home, Michael Angelo wrote to the Pope as follows:

"Holy Father! I was driven from the Palace this morning by order of your Holiness. I beg to inform you that if you need me you will have to seek me everywhere else but in Rome."

Sending off this letter, he called in a dealer and a marble-cutter who lodged with him and said to them:

"Find a Jew, sell everything in my house, and come to Florence."

He then mounted his horse and set off.[2] When the

[1] "When the Pope changed his mind and the ships arrived with the marble from Carrara, I had to pay the freight myself. At the same time the marble-cutters, for whom I had sent to Florence, arrived in Rome; and as I had furnished and fitted up for them the house which Julius had given me behind Santa Caterina, I found myself without money and in great embarrassment . . ." (Letter already quoted, October 1542.)

[2] April 17, 1506.

Pope received the letter he despatched five couriers after him, but they did not overtake the fugitive until eleven o'clock at night, by which time he had reached Poggibonsi, in Tuscany. There they handed him the following order: "Immediately after the receipt of this, return to Rome, on pain of our disgrace." Michael Angelo replied that he would return when the Pope kept his engagements; otherwise, Julius II. might give up all hope of ever seeing him again.[1]

He addressed a sonnet to the Pope, as follows:[2]

"Lord, if ever a proverb was true, it is that which says that *he who can, never will.* You have believed in tales and idle talk; you have recompensed the enemy of truth. As regards myself, I am and have ever been your good old servant. I am as attached to you as the rays are to the sun. And yet the time which I lose afflicts you not! The more I fatigue myself the less you love me. I had hoped to grow greater through your grandeur, and that your just balance and your powerful sword would have been my only judges, and not a lying echo. But heaven makes a mockery of all virtue, in placing it in this world, if it counts on fruit from a dead tree."[3]

It is probable that the affront which he received from Julius II. was not the sole reason for Michael Angelo's flight. In a letter to Giuliano da San Gallo he leads one to suppose that Bramante intended to have him assassinated.[4]

[1] The whole of this narrative is taken, textually, from a letter by Michael Angelo, dated October 1542.

[2] I place it at this date, which appears to me to be the most likely one, although Frey, without, in my opinion, sufficient reason, claims that it was written about 1511.

[3] "Poems," iii. (*See* Appendix, i.)

"The dead tree" is an allusion to the evergreen oak which figures on the arms of the De la Rovere family—that of Julius II.

[4] "That was not the only cause of my departure; there was

Michael Angelo having left, Bramante remained sole master. On the day after his rival's flight he laid the foundation-stone of St. Peter's.[1] His implacable hatred continued to be directed against Michael Angelo's work, and he took steps to ruin it for ever by causing the populace to pillage the workyard on St. Peter's Square where the blocks of marble for the tomb of Julius II. had been collected together.[2]

However, the Pope, enraged by the revolt of his sculptor, despatched brief after brief to the Seigniory of Florence, where Michael Angelo had taken refuge. The Seigniory sent for the artist and said to him: "You have done by the Pope what the King of France would not have presumed to do. We do not wish, because of you, to enter into a war with his Holiness, so you must return to Rome. We will give you letters of such weight that any injustice which may be done to you will also be done to the Seigniory." [3]

But Michael Angelo became obstinate. He laid down conditions. He demanded that Julius should allow him to make his mausoleum, and he stipulated that the work should be carried out not in Rome but in Florence. When Julius made war against Perugia and Bologna [4] and his summonses became more menacing, Michael Angelo thought of escaping to Turkey, the Sultan, through the Franciscans, having invited him to Constantinople to build a bridge at Pera.[5]

another, of which I prefer not to speak. Suffice it to say, that I had reason for thinking that, had I remained in Rome, that city would have been my tomb, rather than that of the Pope. And that was the cause of my sudden departure."

[1] April 18, 1506.

[2] Letter of October 1542.   [3] Ibid.

[4] End of August 1506.

[5] Condivi. In 1504 Michael Angelo had already thought of

Finally, however, he had to give way, and, during the last days of November 1506, he reluctantly proceeded to Bologna, where Julius II. had entered with his conquering army.

"One morning Michael Angelo went to hear Mass at San Petronio. The Pope's groom recognised him and led him before Julius, who was at table at the Palace of the Sixteen. The Pope, irritated, said to him: 'It was your duty to come to seek us (at Rome); but you waited for us to find you (at Bologna)!' Michael Angelo threw himself on his knees and in a loud voice begged for pardon, saying that he had not acted through malice but irritation, because he could not bear being driven away, as had been done. The Pope remained seated, with bent head and face flushed with anger, whereupon a bishop, whom Soderini had sent to defend Michael Angelo, attempted to intervene by saying: 'May it please your Holiness to pay no heed to his stupidities: he sinned through ignorance. Apart from their art, painters are all the same.' At this the Pope became furious and cried: 'What you say is an insult, which comes not from us! You are the ignorant one! . . . Away with you and the devil take you!' And as he did not do as he was told, the Pope's servants threw themselves upon him, with blows, and expelled him from the room. Then, the Pope, having spent his anger on the bishop, made Michael Angelo approach and pardoned him."[1]

Unfortunately, in order to make peace with Julius II., it was necessary to humour his caprices, and the all-

going to Turkey, and in 1519 he was in relations with "the Lord of Andrinopolis," who invited him to come and execute some paintings for him.

Leonardo da Vinci was also tempted to go to Turkey.

[1] Condivi.

powerful will had again changed. There was no longer any question of a mausoleum but of a colossal bronze statue which he proposed to raise at Bologna. In vain did Michael Angelo protest "that he knew nothing about the casting of bronze." He had to set to work to learn, with the result that his life became a torment. He lived in a wretched room, with a single bed, in which he slept with his two Florentine assistants, Lapo and Lodovico, and with his metal-founder, Bernardino. Fifteen months passed full of all sorts of troubles. He quarrelled with Lapo and Lodovico, who robbed him.

"This scamp Lapo," he wrote to his father, "gave every one to understand that he and Lodovico did all the work, or at least that they worked in collaboration with me. He could not understand that he was not the master until I turned him out; then, for the first time, did he see that he was in my employment. I drove him forth as I would a brute."[1]

Lapo and Lodovico complained noisily, and, in addition to spreading calumnies against Michael Angelo in Florence, succeeded in extorting money from his father under the pretext that he had robbed them.

The incapacity of the founder next became apparent.

"I would have believed that Maestro Bernardino was capable of casting even without fire, so great was my faith in him."

In June 1507 the casting of the statue failed; the figure was successful only as far as the waist. Everything had to be recommenced. Michael Angelo was occupied with the work until February 1508 and nearly ruined his health over it.

"I have hardly time to eat," he wrote to his brother. "I live in a state of the greatest inconvenience

[1] Letter to his father, February 8, 1507.

and difficulty. I think of nothing else than working night and day. I have endured such sufferings, and I continue to endure them, that I believe that if I had the statue to make once more my life would not suffice for the task. It has been a gigantic undertaking." [1]

Considering the fatigue entailed, the fate which was in store for this work of art was pitiful. Erected in February 1508 in front of the façade of San Petronio, the statue of Julius II. remained there but four years. In December 1511 it was destroyed by the party of the Bentivoglio family, the enemies of Julius II., and Alfonzo d'Este bought the fragments to make a cannon.

Michael Angelo returned to Rome. Julius now imposed upon him another task, no less unexpected and still more perilous. He ordered the painter, who knew nothing about the technique of fresco painting, to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. One would have said that he took pleasure in ordering impossible things and Michael Angelo in carrying them out.

It seems that it was Bramante who, seeing Michael Angelo return to favour, brought this task upon him—a task in the carrying out of which he thought his glory would wane.[2] The ordeal was all the more dangerous for Michael Angelo as, in the same year, 1508, his rival Raphael had commenced painting the "Stanze" of the Vatican with incomparable success.[3] He did everything

[1] Letters to his brother, September 29 and November 10, 1507.

[2] Such, at any rate, is the contention of Condivi. It is, however, to be noted that, before Michael Angelo's flight to Bologna, the question of him painting the Sistine Chapel had been raised, and that then this project was little to the liking of Bramante, who sought to remove his rival from Rome. (Letter from Pietro Rosselli to Michael Angelo in May 1506.)

[3] Raphael painted the room known as the "Stanza della

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

In the Sistine Chapel

he could to avoid the redoubtable honour; he even went so far as to propose Raphael in his place, saying that this was not a branch of art in which he could succeed. But the Pope persisted in his demands and Michael Angelo had to give way.

Bramante raised a scaffolding for Michael Angelo in the Sistine Chapel, and some painters who had had experience in fresco painting were brought from Florence to assist him. But Michael Angelo was one of those men who would receive no sort of assistance whatsoever. He began by declaring that Bramante's scaffolding was useless and by raising another. As to the Florentine painters, he took a dislike to them, and, without explanation, put them to the door. "One morning he destroyed everything they had painted, shut himself up in the chapel and would not open the door to them. He would not let himself be seen even in his own house. When the joke seemed to them to have lasted long enough they returned to Florence, profoundly humiliated." [1]

Michael Angelo remained alone with a few workmen,[2] and, far from the greater difficulty checking his boldness, he enlarged his plan and decided to paint not only the ceiling, as had at first been proposed, but the walls.

This gigantic undertaking was begun on May 10, 1508. Dark years—the darkest and the most sublime of his whole life! Here we see the legendary Michael Angelo,

Signatura" ("The School of Athens" and the "Dispute of the Holy Sacrament") between April and September 1508.

[1] Vasari.

[2] In the letters of 1510 to his father, Michael Angelo laments on the subject of one of these assistants, who was good for nothing "except to be waited upon . . . This occupation was doubtless lacking to me! I had not enough to do already! . . . He makes me as wretched as a brute."

the hero of the Sistine, he whose majestic image is and ought to remain engraved on the memory of humanity.

He suffered terribly. His letters of those days witness to a passionate discouragement, which could not find appeasement in his divine thoughts.

"I am in a state of great mental depression: it is a year now since I received a fixed income from the Pope. I ask him for nothing, because my work does not advance sufficiently to make remuneration appear to me to be merited. This arises from the difficulty of the work and also from the fact that it does not belong to my profession. Thus I lose my time without result. God help me!"[1]

Hardly had he finished painting "The Deluge" than the work became so mouldy that the figures could no longer be distinguished. He refused to continue. But the Pope would hear of no excuse. The artist had to set to work again.

His relatives still further added to his fatigue and anxiety by their odious importunities. All the members of his family lived at his charge, took advantage of him and worried him to death. His father never ceased his moaning and complaining over money affairs. When Michael Angelo himself was crushed under troubles he had to spend his time in raising his father's courage.

"Do not distress yourself," he wrote to him, "these are not matters in which life is at stake . . . I shall never see you want as long as I myself have anything . . . Even if everything you possess in the world is taken from you, you will lack nothing so long as I exist . . . I would rather be poor and know you were alive than have all the gold in the world and know you were dead . . . If you cannot, like others, have the honours of this world, be

[1] Letter to his father. (January 27, 1509.)

content with having bread, and live with Christ, good and poor, as I do here. For I am wretched, and yet I torment myself neither over life nor honour—that is to say over the world. I live under very great difficulties and in a state of infinite distrust. For the past fifteen years I have not had a good hour. I have done everything to support you, and never have you either recognised or believed it. God pardon us all! I am ready, in the future and as long as I live, ever to act in the same manner, provided that I am able to do so!" [1]

His three brothers exploited him. They expected him to provide them with money and position; they helped themselves without scruple to the little capital which he had amassed at Florence; they quartered themselves upon him in Rome. Buonarroto and Giovan Simone bought the goodwill of a business, and Sigismondo land near Florence. And yet they showed no gratitude towards him; they acted as though all this was their due. Michael Angelo knew that they were taking advantage of him, but he was too proud to prevent them. The scamps did not limit themselves to this. They conducted themselves badly and, in Michael Angelo's absence, ill-treated the father. Furious threats then came from the artist. He governed his brothers, as though they were vicious boys, with the lash. Had need be, he would have killed them.

"Giovan Simone,[2] it is said that he who does good to

[1] Letters to his father, 1509–1512.

[2] Giovan Simone had just ill-treated his father. Michael Angelo wrote to the latter as follows:

"I have seen from your last letter how things are and how Giovan Simone is behaving. I have not had worse news for the past ten years . . . Had it been possible, on the day I received your letter, I should have mounted into the saddle and put everything in order. But since I cannot do that, I am

the righteous makes him better, but that kindness shown to the wicked makes him worse. Many years have I endeavoured by fair words and fair actions to lead you to an honest life, in peace with your father and we others. Yet you are ever worse . . . I might speak to you at great length; but that would only be wasting words. To bring matters to a conclusion, know with certainty that you possess nothing in the world, for it is I who, through love of God and believing that you were one of my brothers, support you. But now I am certain that you are not my brother, for if you had been you would not have threatened my father. Rather are you a brute, and I shall treat you as a brute. Know that it is the duty of him who sees his father threatened or ill-treated to expose his life for him . . . But enough on this subject! . . . I repeat that you possess nothing in the world, and that if I hear but the slightest complaint against you I shall come to teach you for squandering your property and setting fire to the house and estates which you have not earned. You are not in the position you imagine. If I come to you I shall make you acquainted with facts which will bring bitter tears to your eyes and show you on what basis you establish your arrogance . . . If you will endeavour to act well, to honour and venerate your father, I will assist you as I do the others, and, shortly, will procure you a good shop. But if you do otherwise I shall come and arrange your business in such a manner that you will know who you are and exactly what you possess in the world . . . Nothing more! When words are lacking I make up for them by deeds.

writing to him; and if he does not change his disposition, or if he carry off but a toothpick from the house, or does anything to displease you, I beg you to inform me. I will then obtain leave of absence from the Pope and come to you." (Spring 1509.)

" Michelagniolo at Rome.

" Two lines more. For the past twelve years I have lived a wretched life all over Italy. I have supported every disgrace, suffered every difficulty, tormented my body with all sorts of fatigue and exposed my life to a thousand dangers solely in order to aid my house. And now that I have begun to raise it up a little, you amuse yourself by destroying in an hour what has taken years to build! . . . By the body of Christ this shall not be! For I am capable of tearing in pieces ten thousand such men as you, if that is necessary. Be wise, therefore, and do not drive one whose passions are different to yours to extremes!" [1]

It was then Sigismondo's turn.

" I am living here in distress and in a state of great bodily fatigue. I have no friend of any kind and do not want any . . . It is rarely that I have the means to eat to my liking. Cease to cause me anguish, for I can support no more." [2]

Finally, the third brother, Buonarroto, employed in the commercial house of the Strozzis, shamelessly harassed him, after all the advances of money he had received from Michael Angelo, and boasted that he had spent more for him than he had received.

" I should very much like to know," wrote Michael Angelo to him, " where your money comes from. I should much like to know if you count the 228 ducats which you took from me at the Santa Maria Nuova bank, the many other hundreds of ducats which I have sent home, and

[1] Letter to Giovan Simone. Dated by Henry Thode, spring 1509; in Milanesi's edition, July 1508. It is to be noted that Giovan Simone was then a man of thirty. Michael Angelo was only four years his senior.

[2] To Sigismondo, October 17, 1509.

the difficulties and cares which I have had in supporting you. I should much like to know if you take all that into account! If you had sufficient intelligence to recognise the truth, you would not say: 'I have spent so much of my own,' and you would not have beset me here, tormenting me with your affairs, without recollecting all my past conduct towards you. You would have said: 'Michael Angelo knows what he wrote to us; if he does not do it now it is because he has been prevented by something of which we are in ignorance. Let us be patient.' When a horse runs as fast as he can, it is unwise to give him the spur, to make him run more than he is able. But you have never known me. God pardon you! He it is who has granted me the strength to do all that I have done to assist you. But you will not recognise it until I am no more."[1]

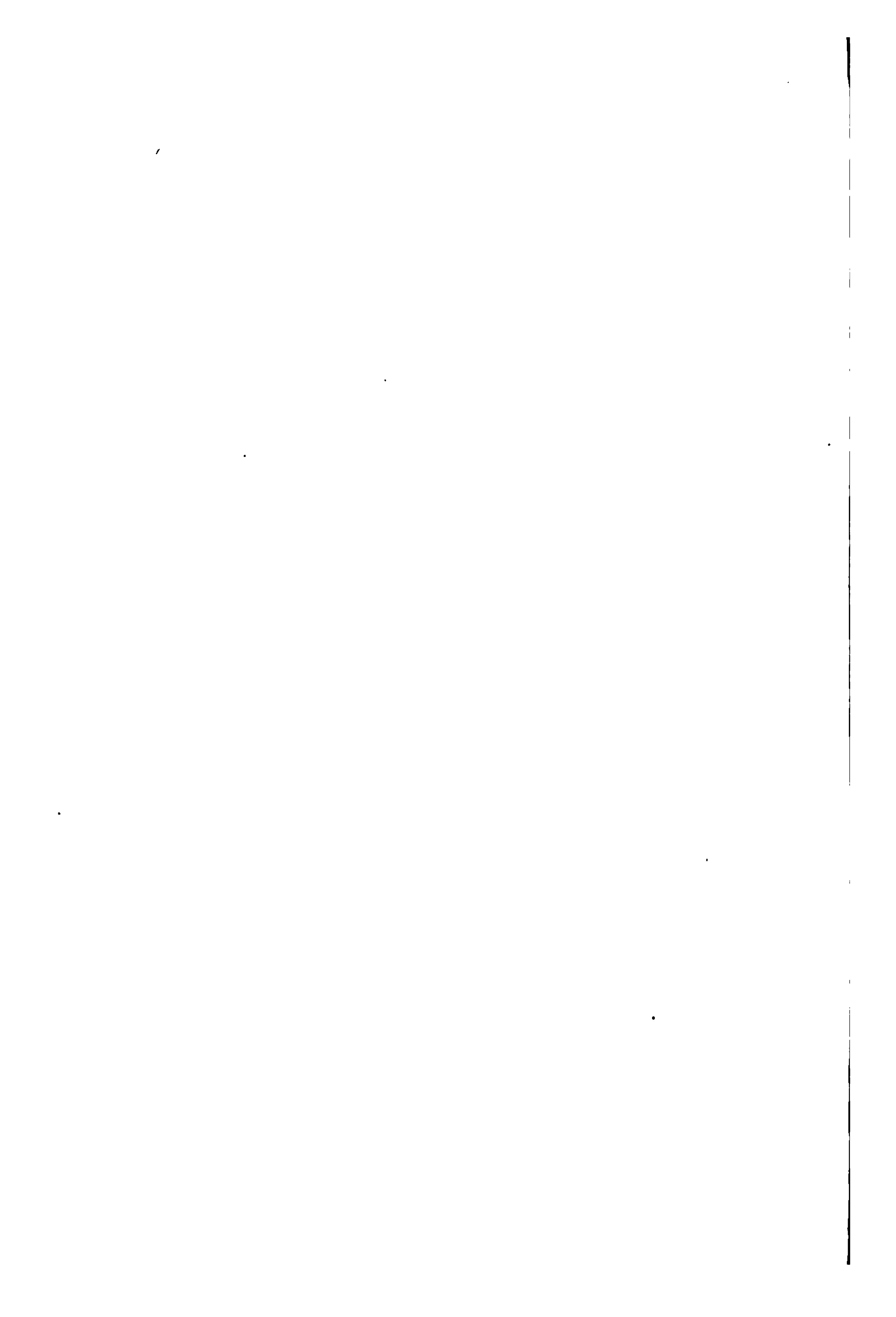
Such was the atmosphere of ingratitude and envy in the midst of which Michael Angelo struggled—between an unworthy family which harassed him and relentless enemies who watched him and anticipated his failure. And yet, during this period, he was accomplishing the heroic work in the Sistine Chapel. But at the price of what desperate efforts! He nearly abandoned everything and fled once more. He was under the impression that he was going to die.[2] Perhaps he would have welcomed death.

The Pope became irritated at his slowness and obstinacy in hiding his work. Their proud characters dashed against each other like thunderclouds. "One day," says Condivi, "on Julius II. asking him when he would have finished the chapel, Michael Angelo made his usual reply, 'When I am able.' The Pope, furious,

[1] Letter to Buonarroto, July 30, 1513.
[2] Letters, August 1512.

DECORATIVE FIGURE

In the Sistine Chapel



struck him with his stick, repeating, 'When I am able! When I am able!' Michael Angelo rushed home and made preparations for leaving Rome. But Julius despatched a courier after him with five hundred ducats, and the man, after doing his best to appease him, presented the Pope's excuses, which Michael Angelo accepted."

But they recommenced on the morrow. One day the Pope ended by saying to him angrily: "Do you want me to have you thrown from the top of your scaffolding?" Michael Angelo had then to give way; he took down the scaffolding, and on All Saints' Day 1512 his work was uncovered.

That great and melancholy *fête*, which receives the funereal reflection of All Souls' Day, was eminently fitted for the inauguration of Michael Angelo's terrible work, full of the spirit of God who creates and destroys—the devouring God in whom the whole force of life rushes like a tempest.[1]

[1] I have analysed the work in my book on Michael Angelo in the series entitled "Les Maîtres de l'Art," and need not here return to the subject.

II

SHATTERED STRENGTH

Roct' è l'alta cholonna.[1]

MICHAEL ANGELO terminated this herculean task, glorious but shattered. Through having to hold his head thrown back for months, whilst painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, "he injured his sight to such an extent that for a long time afterwards he could neither read a letter nor look at an object unless he held them above his head, in order to see them better." [2]

He himself joked about his infirmities:

"Labour has given me a goitre, as water does to the cats of Lombardy . . . My stomach points towards my chin, my beard turns towards the sky, my skull rests on my back and my chest is like that of a harpy. The paint from my brush, in dripping on to my face, has made a many-coloured pattern upon it. My loins have entered into my body and my posterior counterbalances. I walk in a haphazard manner, without being able to see my feet. My skin is extended in front and shortened behind. I am bent like a Syrian bow. My intelligence is as strange as my body, for one plays an ill tune on a bent reed." [3]

[1] "Poems," i. [2] Vasari.

[3] "Poems," ix. (*See* Appendix, ii.)

This poem, written in the burlesque style of Francesco Berni

We must not be deceived by this good humour. Michael Angelo could not endure being ugly. To a man like himself, appreciating physical beauty more than any one, ugliness was a disgrace.[1] We find traces of his humiliation in some of his madrigals.[2] His sorrow was so much the more acute as, the whole of his life he was consumed with love, which does not appear ever to have been returned. Consequently he retired within himself, putting all his tenderness and troubles into his poetry.

The composition of verse—a pressing necessity with him—dated from his earliest years. He covered his drawings, letters and loose sheets of paper with thoughts, to which he afterwards returned and ceaselessly polished. Unfortunately, in 1518, he burnt the greater number of

and addressed to Giovanni da Pistoja, is dated by Frey June-July 1510. Michael Angelo alludes in the final lines to the difficulties he has encountered in painting the Sistine frescoes, and he makes excuse for them on the ground that this is not his profession. "Therefore, Giovanni, defend my dead work, and defend my honour; for painting is not part of my business. *I am not a painter.*"

[1] Henry Thode has rightly pointed out this trait of his character in the first volume of his "Michelangelo und das Ende der Renaissance," 1902, Berlin.

[2] ". . . Since the Lord yields to souls their bodies after death for peace or eternal torment, I beseech Him to leave mine, although ugly, in heaven, as upon the earth, near yours, for a loving heart is equivalent to a beautiful face."

> ". . . Priego 'l mie benchè bructo,
> Com' è qui teco, il voglia im paradiso:
> C'un cor pietoso val quant' un bel viso. . . ."
> ("Poems," cix, 12.)

"Heaven seems justly irritated that I am mirrored so ugly in your beautiful eyes."

> "Ben par che'l ciel s'adiri,
> Che 'n si begli ochi i' mi veggia si bructo. . . ."
> ("Poems," cix, 93.)

these thoughts of his youth, and others were destroyed before his death. However, the few which remain suffice to call up his passions.[1]

The oldest poem seems to have been written in Florence about 1504:[2]

"How happy I lived, Cupid, so long as I was allowed to resist your passion victoriously! Now, alas! my breast is wet with tears—I have felt your strength. . . ."[3]

Two madrigals, written between 1504 and 1511, and probably addressed to the same woman, are poignantly expressive:

"Who is it leads me by force to you . . . Alas! Alas! Alas! . . . closely enchained? And yet I am free! . . ."

> "Chi è quel che per fonza a te mi mena,
> Oilme, oilme, oilme,
> Legato e strecto, e son libero e sciolto?"[4]

"How is it possible that I am no longer myself?

[1] The first complete edition of the poems of Michael Angelo was published by his great-nephew at the beginning of the seventeenth century under the title: "Rime di Michelangelo Buonarroti raccolte da M. A. suo nipote," 1623, Florence. But it is full of errors. Cesare Guasti, in 1863, issued in Florence the first edition that was at all exact. But the only truly scientific and complete edition is the admirable one of Carl Frey: "Die Dictungen des Michelagniolo Buonarroti, herausgegeben und mit kritischem Apparate verschen von Dr. Carl Frey," 1897, Berlin. It is the one to which I refer in the course of this biography.

[2] On the same sheet are drawings of horses and men fighting.

[3] "Poems," ii. (*See* Appendix, iii.)

[4] Ibid., v.

O God! O God! O God!... Who has torn me from myself?... Who can do more for me than I myself? O God! O God! O God!..."

> "Come puo esser, ch'io non sia piu mio?
> O Dio, o Dio, o Dio!
> Chi m' ha tolto a me stesso,
> Ch' à me fusse piu presso
> O più di me potessi, che poss'io?
> O Dio, o Dio, o Dio!..."[1]

On the back of a letter of December 1507, written in Bologna, was the following juvenile sonnet, the sensual affectation of which evokes a vision of Botticelli:

"Light and with flowers well decked, how happy is the crown upon her golden head of hair! How the flowers eagerly press upon her forehead, seeing who will be the first to kiss it! The dress which encircles her breast and spreads below is happy the livelong day. The golden tissue is never tired of caressing her cheeks and neck. Still more precious is the fortune of the gold-edged ribbon which lightly presses upon the breast which it envelops. Her belt seems to say: 'I would ever embrace you...' Ah!... what then would my arms not do!"[2]

In a long poem of an intimate character—a sort of confession,[3] which it is difficult to quote exactly—Michael Angelo described, with a singular crudity of expression, his love anguish:

"When I remain a day without seeing you I can find

[1] "Poems," vi.

[2] Ibid., vii. (*See* Appendix, iv.)

[3] I adopt the expression used by Frey, who dates the poem but without sufficient ground, in my opinion, for doing so, 1531–1532. It seems to me to be of much earlier date.

peace nowhere. When I see you, you are to me what food is to one who is hungry . . . When you smile at me or motion to me in the street, I take fire like powder . . . When you speak to me, I blush, lose my voice, and suddenly my great desire vanishes. . . ."[1]

Then come sorrowful lamentations, such as:

"Ah! infinite suffering, which tears my heart, when it thinks that she whom I love so much loves me not! How shall I live? . . ."

> ". . . Ahi, che doglia 'nfinita
> Sente 'l mio cor, quando li torna a mente,
> Che quella ch'io tant'amo amor non sente!
> Come restero 'n vita? . . ."[2]

These lines, also, are written next to some studies for the "Madonna" of the Medici Chapel:

"Alone, I remain burning in the shade, when the sun deprives the world of its rays. Every one rejoices, but I, stretched on the ground and stricken with sorrow, moan and weep."[3]

Love is absent from Michael Angelo's powerful sculpture and paintings, which he reserved for only his most

[1] "Poems," xxxvi. (*See* Appendix, v.)

[2] "Poems," xiii. A celebrated madrigal, which the composer, Bartolommeo Tromboncino set to music, before 1518, is of the same period:

"How shall I have the courage to live without you, my treasure, if, on leaving, I cannot ask for your assistance? These sobs and tears and sighs, with which my wretched heart follows you, have shown you, madame, my approaching death and martyrdom. But if it is true that absence will never obliterate my faithful servitude, I leave my heart with you. My heart is no longer minc." ("Poems," xi. *See* Appendix, vi.)

[3] "Sol' io ardendo all'ombra mi rimango,
Quand' el sol de suo razi el mondo spoglia;
Ogni altro per piaciere, e io per doglia,
Prostrato in terra, mi lamento e piangho."
("Poems," xxii.)

THE SLAVE

From the statue in the Louvre

heroic thoughts. It seems as though he had been ashamed to introduce the weaknesses of his heart into them. He confided in poetry alone. It is there, under a rugged envelope, that we must look for the secret of his timid and tender heart :

"Amando, a che son nato ?"[1]

On terminating the paintings of the Sistine Chapel, and Julius II. having died,[2] Michael Angelo returned to Florence and resumed work on the project which he had most at heart—the mausoleum of the dead Pope. He undertook by contract to complete it in seven years.[3] For three years he was almost exclusively occupied with this work.[4] During this relatively tranquil period—a period of melancholy and serene maturity when the furious agitation of the Sistine days subsided, like the raging sea which returns to its bed—Michael Angelo produced his most perfect works, those which best display the equilibrium of his passion and will-power—his "Moses,"[5] and the "Slaves" of the Louvre.[6]

[1] "I love ; why was I born ?" ("Poems," cix, 35.) Compare these love poems (in which love and sorrow seem to be synonymous) with the voluptuous enthusiasm of the juvenile and ungraceful sonnets of Raphael, written on the back of his drawings for the "Dispute of the Holy Sacrament."

[2] Julius II. died on February 21, 1513, three months and a half after the inauguration of the frescoes of the Sistine.

[3] Contract of March 6, 1513. The new project, more important than the first one, included thirty-two large statues.

[4] During this time Michael Angelo seems to have accepted but one commission : that for the statue of Christ of S. Maria Sopra Minerva.

[5] The "Moses" was to be one of six colossal figures crowning the upper floor of the monument to Julius II. Michael Angelo did not cease working on it until 1545.

[6] The "Slaves," on which Michael Angelo was working in 1513,

But it was only for a moment: the stormy course of his life was resumed almost immediately and he fell back again into the night.

The new Pope, Leo X., undertook to tear Michael Angelo away from the glorification of his predecessor and to attach him to the triumph of his own house. It was more a question of pride than sympathy with him; for, with his epicurean nature, he could not understand Michael Angelo's sad genius[1]—all his favours were for Raphael. But the man who had produced the paintings of the Sistine Chapel was an Italian glory, and Leo X. wished to domesticate it.

He offered to allow Michael Angelo to build the façade of San Lorenzo, the church of the Medici, at Florence. Michael Angelo, stimulated by his rivalry with Raphael, who had profited by his absence to become the sovereign of art in Rome,[2] allowed himself to be allured by this

were given by him in 1546 to Roberto Strozzi, the Florentine Republican, then exiled in France, who presented them to Francis I.

[1] He was not sparing in demonstrations of tenderness towards him; but he was frightened of Michael Angelo. He felt ill at ease in his presence. "When the Pope speaks of you," wrote Sebastiano del Piombo to the artist, "it is as though he were speaking of one of his brothers. There are almost tears in his eyes. He has told me that you were brought up together, and he protests that he knows and loves you. But you frighten everybody—even Popes." (October 27, 1520.)

Michael Angelo was ridiculed at the court of Leo X. He laid himself open to raillery through the imprudence of his language. An unfortunate letter which he wrote to Cardinal Bibbiena, the patron of Raphael, caused joy amongst his enemies. "They speak of nothing else at the palace," wrote Sebastiano to Michael Angelo, "but of your letter. Everybody is laughing." (July 3, 1520.)

[2] Bramante had died in 1514, and Raphael had just been appointed superintendent of the building of St. Peter's.

new task, which it was materially impossible for him to accomplish without neglecting the old one, and which was to be the cause of endless worry to him. He tried to persuade himself that he could manage both the mausoleum of Julius II. and the façade of San Lorenzo at once. He counted on relieving himself of a good deal of the work by having an assistant, and himself executing only the principal statues. But, as usual, he gradually became interested in his plan, and soon could no longer suffer the idea of dividing the honour with another. Moreover, he feared that the Pope might withdraw it from him, so he begged Leo X. to bind him to this new chain.[1]

Naturally it became impossible for him to continue the mausoleum of Julius II. But the saddest part of the matter was that he did not succeed either in building the façade. Not content with refusing every collaborator, his terrible mania for wishing to do everything himself drove him, instead of remaining in Florence and working on his work, to go to Carrara to superintend the extraction of the blocks of marble. There he found himself face to face with all sorts of difficulties. The Medicis wished to utilise the quarries of Pietrasanta, recently acquired by Florence, in preference to those of Carrara. For having taken the part of the Carrarais, Michael Angelo was

[1] "I want to make this façade into a work which will be a mirror of architecture and sculpture for the whole of Italy. The Pope and the Cardinal (Julius de' Medici, the future Clement VII.) must decide quickly, if they wish me to do it, or not. And if they wish me to undertake the work, we must sign a contract . . . Messer Domenico, send me a definite reply on the subject of their intentions. That will give me the greatest joy." (To Domenico Buoninsegni, July 1517.)

The contract was signed with Leo X. on January 19, 1518. Michael Angelo undertook to build the façade in eight years.

insultingly accused by the Pope of being bribed;[1] and for having had to obey Leo's orders he was persecuted by the Carrarais, who, by coming to an arrangement with the Ligurian mariners, prevented him finding a single ship, from Genoa to Pisa, to carry his marble.[2] He had to construct a road, partly on piles, through the mountains and over the swampy plains—a road to the cost of which the people of the district refused to contribute a penny. The workers knew nothing about their work. The quarries were new and the workman also. Michael Angelo lamented.

"In wishing to conquer these mountains and bring art here I have undertaken to awaken the dead." [3]

He stuck to his task, however.

[1] Letter of February 2, 1518, from Cardinal Julius de' Medici to Michael Angelo: "We are somewhat suspicious that, through personal interest, you are siding with the Carrarais and wish to depreciate the Pietrasanta quarries . . . We have to inform you, without entering into further explanations, that His Holiness wishes that the entire work be carried out with blocks of Pietrasanta marble, and no other . . . Should you act otherwise, it will be against the express desire of His Holiness and myself, and we shall have good reason to be seriously irritated against you . . . Banish, therefore, this stubbornness from your mind."

[2] "I have been as far as Genoa to look for ships . . . The Carrarais have bribed all the owners of boats . . . I must go to Pisa. . . ." (Letter from Michael Angelo to Urbano, April 2, 1518.) "The ships I hired at Pisa have not arrived. I believe they have tricked me—my fate in all things! Oh! cursed a thousand times be the day and hour I left Carrara! It is the cause of my ruin. . . ." (Letter of April 18, 1518.)

[3] Letter of April 18, 1518. A few months later he wrote: "The quarry is very precipitous, and the people quite ignorant. Patience! I must conquer the mountains and instruct the men. . . ." (Letter of September 1518 to Berto da Filicaja.)

"What I have promised I will carry out, in spite of everything. With God's assistance I will produce the finest work which Italy has ever seen."

What strength, enthusiasm and genius wasted in vain! At the end of September 1518 he fell ill at Seravezza, through overwork and worry. He was well aware that his health and dreams were being ruined by this workman's life. He was obsessed with the desire to at last begin his work and by the anguish of being prevented. He was pressed by his other engagements which he could not carry out.[1]

"I am dying with impatience because my unhappy destiny will not allow me to do what I want. . . . I am dying through sorrow. I have the air of being a deceiver, although it is no fault of mine. . . ."[2]

Returning to Florence, he wore himself out with worry whilst awaiting the arrival of the consignments of marble. But the Arno was dry and the boats loaded with blocks could not ascend the river.

At last they arrived. Was he, this time, going to set to work? No. He returned to the quarries. He persisted in not beginning until he had collected, as in the case of the mausoleum of Julius II., a very mountain of marble. Ever did he postpone the day for setting to work. Perhaps he was frightened of doing so. Had he

[1] The "Christ" of the Church of S. Maria Sopra Minerva and the mausoleum of Julius II.

[2] Letter of December 21, 1518, to Cardinal d'Agen. The four shapeless statues (four "Slaves" for the tomb of Julius II.), barely commenced, of the Boboli grottos appear to belong to this period.

not promised too much? Had he not been rash in undertaking this great architectural work? This was not his profession. Where could he have learnt it? And now he could neither advance nor recede.

So much labour did not result even in the safe transport of the marble. Out of six monolithic columns sent to Florence four were broken on the way and one even in Florence. He was the victim of his workmen.

In the end the Pope and Cardinal de' Medici lost all patience over the precious time which had been uselessly lost in the midst of quarries and on muddy roads. On March 10, 1520, a papal brief released Michael Angelo from the contract of 1518 for the façade of San Lorenzo. Michael Angelo did not receive notice of this until the squads of workmen sent to replace him arrived at Pietrasanta. He felt cruelly hurt.

"I do not blame the Cardinal," he said, "for the three years I have lost here. I do not blame him because I am ruined over this San Lorenzo work. I do not blame him for the very great affront which I have received in them giving me this commission and then in taking it away. I do not even know why. I do not blame him for all I have lost and spent . . . And now the matter may be summed up as follows: the Pope Leo takes over again the quarry with the cut blocks; the money I have in hand—500 ducats—remains mine; and they give me my liberty." [1]

It was not his protectors whom Michael Angelo ought to have accused—it was himself, and he well knew it. That was the sad part of it. He strove against himself. What had he accomplished between 1515 and 1520, when in the fulness of his strength and overflowing with

[1] "Letters," 1520. (Milanesi's edition, p. 415.)

GOD CREATING THE SUN AND MOON

In the Sistine Chapel

genius ?—the lifeless "Christ" of the Church of S. Maria Sopra Minerva—a work by Michael Angelo in which Michael Angelo is absent! Moreover, he could not even complete it.[1]

From 1515 to 1520, during these closing years of the great Renaissance, before the overwhelming disasters which were to put an end to the springtime of Italy, Raphael had painted the Loggie, the Incendio di Borgo, the Farnesina Palace, and masterpieces of every description; had built the Villa Madame, directed the building of St. Peter's, the excavations, the *fêtes*, and the raising of monuments; had governed over art and founded a school of innumerable pupils. And in the midst of this triumphant work he had died.[2]

The bitterness of his disillusions, the despair caused by lost days, ruined hopes and a broken will are reflected in the melancholy works of the following period: the tombs of the Medicis and the new statues for the mausoleum of Julius II.[3]

The free Michael Angelo, who all his life was passing from one yoke to another, had changed his master. Cardinal Julius de' Medici, who soon became Pope under

[1] Michael Angelo entrusted the completion of this "Christ" to his unskilful pupil, Piero Urbano, who "mutilated it." (Letter from Sebastiano del Piombo to Michael Angelo, September 6, 1521.) The sculptor Frizzi, of Rome, repaired the damages as well as was possible.

All these troubles did not prevent Michael Angelo from looking for fresh tasks to add to those which were crushing him. On October 20, 1519, he signed the petition of the Academicians of Florence to Leo X. begging that the remains of Dante be brought from Ravenna to Florence; and he offered "to raise to the memory of the divine poet a monument worthy of him."

[2] April 6, 1520.

[3] "The Conqueror."

the name of Clement VII., reigned over him from 1520 to 1534.

Critics have been very severe on Clement VII. Doubtless, like all these Popes, he wished to make art and artists the servants of his family pride. But Michael Angelo had no great reason for complaining of him. No Pope loved him so much. Not one of the Popes showed a more constant and passionate interest in his work.[1] Not one of them understood better his weakness of will, taking, if need be, his defence against himself and preventing him from wasting his energies in vain. Even after the revolt of Florence and the rebellion of Michael Angelo, Clement in no way changed in his disposition towards him.[2] But it did not depend upon *him* to appease the disquietude, fever, pessimism and deadly melancholy which consumed this great heart. What signified the personal kindness of a master? He was always a master!

"I served the Popes," said Michael Angelo later, "but it was under compulsion." [3]

What signified a little glory and one or two fine works? That was so far removed from what he had dreamed! . . . And old age was coming on. And everything

[1] In 1526 Michael Angelo was to write to him once a week.

[2] "He adores everything you do," wrote Sebastiano del Piombo to Michael Angelo. "He loves as much as it is possible to love. He speaks of you so honourably, and with so much affection, that a father would not say of his son all that he says of you . . ." (April 29, 1531.) "If you would come to Rome, you could be anything you liked—duke or king . . . You would have your share in this papacy, of which you are the master, and with which you can do what you like." (December 5, 1531.)

In reading these statements, we must, in truth, make allowance for Sebastiano del Piombo's Venetian propensity for boasting.

[3] Letter from Michael Angelo to his nephew Leonardo (1548).

around him was becoming gloomy. The Renaissance was declining. Rome was on the eve of being sacked by barbarians. The threatening shadow of a sad God was about to obscure the mind of Italy. Michael Angelo felt the tragic hour approaching, and suffered the keenest anguish.

After dragging Michael Angelo from the inextricable enterprise in which he had become involved, Clement VII. resolved to direct his genius into a new channel, in which he could closely superintend him. He entrusted him with the building of the Medici chapel and tombs.[1] His intention was to occupy his services exclusively. He even proposed that he should take Orders,[2] and offered him an ecclesiastical appointment. Michael Angelo refused. Nevertheless, Clement VII. paid him a monthly salary, three times as large as he had demanded, and presented him with a house in the neighbourhood of San Lorenzo.

Everything seemed to be progressing favourably and work on the chapel was in full swing when suddenly

[1] Work was begun in March 1521, but was not actively proceeded with until the appointment of Cardinal Julius de' Medici to the pontifical throne, under the title of Clement VII., on November 19, 1523. (Leo X. died on December 6, 1521, and from January 1522 to September 1523 was succeeded by Adrian VI.)

The original plan included four tombs: those of Lorenzo the Magnificent, of his brother Julian, of his son Julian, Duke of Nemours, and of his grandson, Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino. In 1524 Clement VII. decided to add to them the sarcophagus of Leo X., and his own, reserving the place of honour for them. *See* Marcel Reymond's "L'Architecture des tombeaux des Médicis" (*Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 1907).

At the same time Michael Angelo was commissioned to build the "Laurentian" library.

[2] There was a question of him joining the Franciscan Order. (Letter from Fattucci to Michael Angelo in the name of Clement VII., January 2, 1524.)

Michael Angelo abandoned his house and refused Clement VII.'s allowance.[1] He was passing through a fresh period of discouragement. The heirs of Julius II. could not pardon him for having abandoned the work he had commenced; they threatened him with legal proceedings and questioned his loyalty. At the idea of a lawsuit Michael Angelo lost his head; his conscience told him that his adversaries were in the right—that he had broken his engagements. It seemed to him that it was impossible for him to accept Clement VII.'s money until he had returned that which he had received from Julius II.

"I work no longer, I live no longer," he wrote.[2] He entreated the Pope to intervene with the heirs of Julius II. in order to assist him to pay everything he owed them.

"I will sell everything, do anything necessary to accomplish this restitution."

Or else he asked to be allowed to devote himself entirely to the monument of Julius II.:

"The carrying out of this obligation is dearer to me than life."

At the thought that, should Clement VII. die, he would be abandoned to his enemies, he became like a child, weeping and despairing:

"If the Pope leaves me there I can no longer remain in this world . . . I know not what I am writing. I have completely lost my head. . . ."[3]

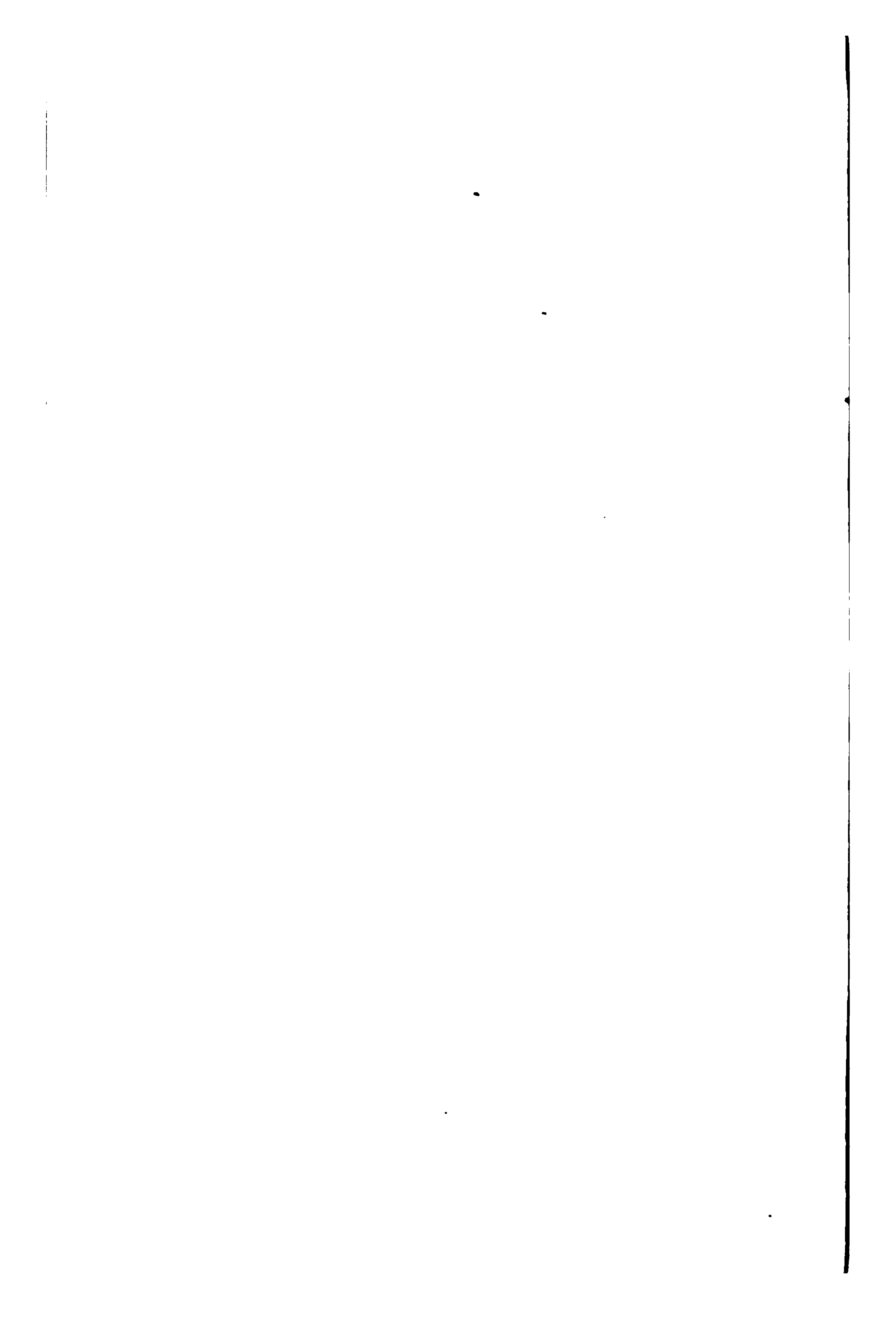
[1] March 1524.

[2] Letter from Michael Angelo to Giovanni Spina, agent of the Pope. (April 19, 1525.)

[3] Letter from Michael Angelo to Fattucci. (October 24, 1525.)

MONUMENT OF LORENZO DE' MEDICI

Medici Chapel, San Lorenzo, Florence



Clement VII., who did not take this artist-like despair very seriously, insisted on his continuing work on the Medici chapel. His friends could not understand his scruples and counselled him not to be so ridiculous as to refuse his allowance. One of them gave him a good shaking for having acted without reflection and begged him not to give way in the future to his manias.[1] Another wrote:

"They tell me that you have refused your allowance, abandoned your house and stopped work. That seems to me to be an act of sheer madness. My friend, you are playing into the hands of your enemies . . . Occupy yourself, therefore, no longer with the mausoleum of Julius II. and take your allowance; for they give it willingly."[2]

Michael Angelo determined to have his own way, so the pontifical treasury played him the trick of taking him at his word, and the allowance was stopped. A few months later the wretched man, at the last extremity, was reduced to begging for what he had refused. He did so, at first, timidly and full of shame.

"My dear Giovanni, since the pen is ever bolder than the tongue, I write to say to you what I have often been wanting to say of recent days, and what I have not had the courage to express to you by word of mouth. May I still count on an allowance? . . . If I were certain that I should no longer receive it, that would in no way change my plans—I should still continue to work for the

[1] Letter from Fattucci to Michael Angelo. (March 22, 1524.)
[2] Letter from Leonardo Sellajo to Michael Angelo. (March 24, 1524.)

Pope as much as I was able. But I should arrange my affairs in consequence."[1]

Pushed hard by necessity, he returned to the charge:

"After careful reflection, I see how much the Pope has this San Lorenzo work at heart; and since his Holiness, of his own accord, granted me an allowance, with the object of giving me greater leisure for serving him promptly, it would only be retarding the work if I were to refuse it. I have, therefore, changed my mind, and I now write to ask for it, for more reasons than I can explain. Will you give it me, counting from the day on which it was granted? . . . Tell me at what moment you would like me to take it."[2]

But they wished to give him a lesson: they turned a deaf ear to his demands. Two months later he had still received nothing. More than once, after writing these two letters, was he obliged to ask for his allowance.

Worrying himself continually, he worked on. He complained that these cares were trammels on his imagination.

"Worries may have a great effect on me . . . One cannot work with one's hands at one thing and with one's head at another, especially in sculpture. They say that this serves to spur me on; but I contend that the goad is a bad one and may turn in the opposite direction. It is already more than a year since I have received an allowance and I struggle against poverty. I am very

[1] Letter from Michael Angelo to Giovanni Spina. (1524. Milanesi's edition, p. 425.)

[2] Letter from Michael Angelo to Giovanni Spina. (August 29, 1525.)

much alone, in the midst of my difficulties, and I have so many of them that they occupy me more than my art. My means do not permit me to have any one to serve me."[1]

Clement VII. showed that he was sometimes touched by his sufferings. He affectionately expressed his sympathy and assured him of his favour "as long as he lived."[2] But the incurable frivolity of the Medici got the upper hand, and, instead of relieving him of part of his work, he gave him fresh commissions, amongst others one for an absurd Colossus, the head of which would have been a steeple and the arm a chimney.[3] Michael Angelo had to occupy himself for some time with this curious idea. He was also constantly struggling with his workmen, masons and carters, whom certain persons—precursors of the modern advocates of an eight hours day—endeavoured to entice from their work.[4]

At the same time his domestic troubles did nothing but increase. His father, as he grew older, became more irritable and unjust. One day he took it into his head to flee from Florence, accusing his son of having driven him from the house. It was on that occasion that Michael Angelo wrote him the following admirable letter:[5]

"Very dear father, I was very surprised yesterday not to find you at home, and now that I learn that you

[1] Letter from Michael Angelo to Fattucci. (October 24, 1525.)

[2] Letter from Pier Paolo Marzi, on behalf of Clement VII., to Michael Angelo. (December 23, 1525.)

[3] Letters from October to December 1525. (Milanesi's edition, pp. 448–449.)

[4] Letter from Michael Angelo to Fattucci. (June 17, 1526.)

[5] Henry Thode dates this letter about 1521. In Milanesi's edition it figures (wrongly) under the date 1516.

complain of me and say that I have driven you away, I am all the more astonished. From the day of my birth until now I am certain of never having had the intention of doing anything, great or small, to displease you. All the difficulties which I have supported I have ever supported through my love for you . . . I have ever taken your part . . . But a few days ago I told and promised you that, as long as I lived, I should devote all my strength to you: and I again make that promise. I am astounded that you have so soon forgotten all that. For the past thirty years you and your sons have tested me. You know that I have ever been good to you, as far as I was able, both in thought and in deed. How can you go about repeating everywhere that I have driven you away? Do you not see what a reputation you are giving me? Nothing more now is wanting to make my troubles complete, and all these troubles I support through my love for you! Well, indeed, do you reward me! . . . But so let it be. I wish to persuade myself that I have never ceased to cause you shame and do you harm, and I ask your pardon as though I had done so. Pardon me as you would a son who has always lived an evil life and done you all the harm that is possible in this world. Once more I beg you to pardon me, wretch that I am. But do not accuse me of having driven you from home, for my reputation is dearer to me than you are aware. In spite of everything, I am your son."

So much love and humility disarmed the embittered mind of the old man for but a moment. Some time afterwards he accused his son of having robbed him. Michael Angelo, stung to the quick, wrote to him as follows:[1]

[1] "Letters." (June 1523.)

THE CREATION OF MAN

In the Sistine Chapel

"I no longer know what you desire of me. If my life is a burden to you, you have discovered the right means of getting rid of me, and you will soon enter into possession of the keys of the treasure which you pretend I guard. And you will do well; for everybody in Florence knows that you were immensely rich, that I have ever robbed you, and that I merit punishment. You will be highly praised! . . . Say and shout about me anything you like, but write to me no more, for you prevent me working. You force me to remind you of all you have received from me during the past twenty-five years. I did not want to say it, but at last you force me to do so . . . Take great care. . . . We die but once and return not afterwards to repair the injustice which we have committed. You have waited until the eve of death to commit them. God help you!"

Such was the assistance which he got from the members of his family. "Patience!" he said, with a sigh, in a letter to a friend. "God forbid that what does not displease Him should displease me!"[1]

In the midst of these sorrows his work failed to advance, and when the political events which overwhelmed Italy in 1527 occurred not one of the statues for the Medici chapel was yet ready.[2] Thus, this new period from 1520 to 1527 had merely added its disillusions and fatigue to those of the preceding one, without having brought Michael Angelo the joy of a single completed work, of a single realised project, for more than ten years.

[1] Letter from Michael Angelo to Fattucci. (June 17, 1526.)

[2] The same letter, June 1526, says that a statue of a captain had been commenced, as well as four allegories for the sarcophagi, and the Madonna.

III

DESPAIR

Oilme, Oilme, ch'i' son tradito. . . .[1]

UNIVERSAL disgust of things and of himself threw him into the Revolution, which broke out in Florence in 1527.

Up to that time Michael Angelo had shown in political matters the same indecision of mind from which he ever suffered in his life and in his art. Never did he succeed in conciliating his personal opinions with his obligations towards the Medici. This violent genius was, moreover, ever timid in action; he would not run the risk of struggling against the powerful ones of this world on the ground of politics and religion. His letters show him to have been ever anxious over himself and the members of his family, fearing to compromise himself and denying the bold words which he sometimes uttered in a first movement of indignation against some act of tyranny.[2] At every moment he was writing to his family to tell them to take care, to keep silent, and flee at the first alarm.

"Act as you would in plague time—be the first to

[1] "Poems," xlix.

[2] Letter of September 1512 on the subject of what he had said about the sack of Prato by the Imperiaux, allies of the Medici.

flee . . . Life is worth more than fortune . . . Remain in peace, make no enemy, confide in no one save God, and say neither good nor evil of any one, for we know not the end of things. Occupy yourself solely over your business . . . Meddle with nothing." [1]

His brothers and friends laughed at his disquietude and said that he was crazy.[2]

"Do not laugh at me," replied the saddened Michael Angelo; "one ought not to laugh at any one."[3]

There was nothing, indeed, to laugh over in the perpetual agitation of this great man. He was rather to be pitied for his wretched nerves, which made him the victim of terrors against which he struggled in vain. All the more merit was due to him, on recovering from these humiliating attacks, for forcing his sick body and mind to face the danger, from which it was his first impulse to flee. Moreover, he had more reason to fear than another, for he was more intelligent, and, with his pessimistic outlook, he saw but too clearly the misfortunes which were about to fall on Italy. But, to have allowed himself, naturally timid as he was, to be drawn into the Florentine Revolution he must have been at the height of despair, which revealed the bottom of his soul.

Michael Angelo's soul, so timorously retired within itself, was ardently republican. We see this from the fiery words which, in confidential or feverish moments, sometimes escaped from him, particularly in the conversations which he had later[4] with his friends Luigi

[1] Letter from Michael Angelo to Buonarroto. (September 1512.)

[2] "I am not insane, as you believe. . . ." (Michael Angelo to Buonarroto, September, 1515.)

[3] Michael Angelo to Buonarroto. (September and October 1512.)

[4] In 1545.

del Riccio, Antonio Petreo and Donato Giannotti,[1] and which the last named reproduced in his "Dialogues on the Divine Comedy."[2] The friends expressed astonishment that Dante should have placed Brutus and Cassius in the last degree of Hell and Cæsar above. Michael Angelo questioned on the point, spoke in favour of tyrannicide:

"If you had attentively read the first cantos," he said, "you would have seen that Dante knew the nature of tyrants only too well, and what punishments they deserved to receive from God and man. He places them among those who have been 'violent against their neighbour,' and punishes them in the seventh circle by plunging them into boiling blood . . . Since Dante recognised that, it is impossible to admit that he did not recognise that Cæsar was the tyrant of his country and that Brutus and Cassius did right to massacre him. For he who kills a tyrant, kills not a man but a beast with human face. All tyrants are devoid of the love which every one ought to naturally feel for his neighbour. They are deprived of human inclinations; they are no longer, therefore, men but brutes. That they possess no love for their neighbour is evident, otherwise they would not have taken what belonged to others, and would not have become tyrants by trampling others

[1] It was for Donato Giannotti that Michael Angelo made the bust of Brutus. A few years before the Dialogue, in 1536, Alessandro de' Medici had been assassinated by Lorenzino, who was hailed as another Brutus.

[2] "De' giorni che Dante consumò nel cercare l'Inferno e 'l Purgatorio." The question discussed by the friends concerned the number of days Dante spent in Hell. Was it from Friday to Saturday evening, or from Thursday evening to Sunday morning? They had recourse to Michael Angelo, who knew Dante's work better than any one.

under foot . . . It is therefore clear that he who kills a tyrant does not commit murder, since he kills not a man but a beast. Thus, Brutus and Cassius did not commit a crime in assassinating Cæsar. Firstly, because they killed a man whom every Roman citizen, in accordance with the laws, was obliged to kill. Secondly, because they did not kill a man but a brute with a human face."[1]

Thus Michael Angelo found himself, in the days of the national republican awakening which followed in Florence on the news of the taking of Rome by the armies of Charles V.[2] and the expulsion of the Medici,[3] in the front rank of Florentine revolutionaries. The same man who, in ordinary times, advised the members of his family to flee from politics as they would from the plague was in such a state of excitement that he feared neither the one nor the other. He remained in Florence, where there was both the plague and the revolution. The epidemic seized his brother Buonarroto, who died in his arms.[4] In October 1528 he took part in the deliberations concerning the defence of the city. On January 10, 1529, he was chosen in the *Collegium* of the *Nove di milizia* to superintend the work of fortifying it. On April 6 he was appointed, for one year, *governatore generale* and *procuratore* of the fortifications of Florence. In June he

[1] Michael Angelo—or Giannotti who speaks in his name—takes care to distinguish between tyrants and hereditary kings, or constitutional princes. "I do not speak here of princes who possess their power through the authority of centuries or through the will of the people, and who govern their town in perfect accord with the people . . ."

[2] May 6, 1527.

[3] Expulsion of Hippolyte and Alessandro de' Medici. (May 17, 1527.)

[4] July 2, 1528.

went to inspect the citadel of Pisa and the bastions of Arezzo and Leghorn. In July and August he was sent to Ferrara to examine the famous defences there and confer with the Duke—a great authority on fortifications.

Michael Angelo recognised that the most important strategical point of Florence was the hill of San Miniato, so he decided to make this position secure by means of bastions. But—why we know not—he met with opposition from the gonfaloniere Capponi, who sought to remove him from Florence.[1] Michael Angelo, suspecting Capponi and the Medicean party of wishing to get rid of him, in order to prevent the defence of the city, took up his quarters at San Miniato and moved not an inch. But his unhealthy distrust welcomed all the rumours of treason which ever circulate in a besieged town, and which, on this occasion, were only too well founded. Capponi, suspected, had been replaced as gonfaloniere by Francesco Carducci; but they had appointed *condottiere* and governor-general of the Florentine troops the disquieting Malatesta Baglioni, who was later to deliver the city into the hands of the Pope. Michael Angelo foresaw the crime, and communicated his fears to the Seigniory. "The gonfaloniere Carducci, instead of thanking him, reprimanded him insultingly; he reproached him with always being suspicious and full of fear."[2] Malatesta heard of Michael Angelo's denunciation. A man of his stamp stuck at nothing to get rid of a dangerous adversary, and, as general-in-chief, he was all-powerful in Florence. Michael Angelo thought that he was lost.

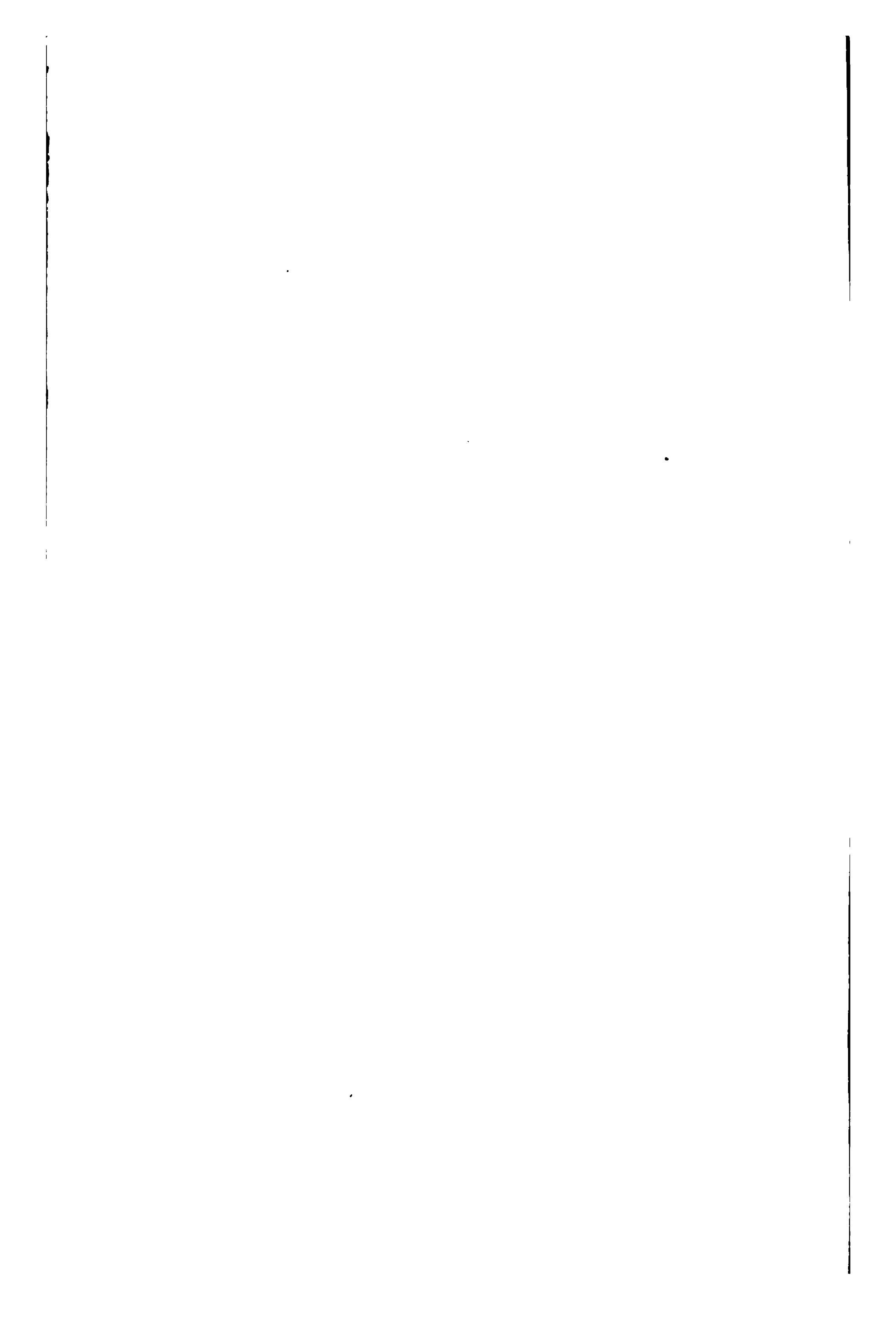
"I was, however, determined," he wrote, "to await

[1] Busini, according to confidences of Michael Angelo.

[2] Condivi. "And certainly," adds Condivi, "he would have done well to listen to the good advice, for when the Medici returned he was beheaded."

THE ERYTHRÆAN SYBIL

From the Sistine Chapel



the end of the war without fear. But on Tuesday morning, September 21, some one came to the San Niccolò gate, where I was on the bastions, and whispered n my ear that if I wished to save my life I must no longer remain in Florence. He came with me to my house, ate with me, brought me horses and did not leave me until he had seen me outside Florence." [1]

Varchi, completing these particulars, adds that Michael Angelo "had twelve thousand gold florins sown in three shirts stitched in the form of petticoats, and that he fled from Florence, not without difficulty, by the Justice Gate, which was the least guarded, accompanied by Rinaldo Corsini and his pupil, Antonio Mini."

"I know not whether it was God or the devil who urged me to the step," wrote Michael Angelo a few days afterwards.

It was his habitual demon of insane terror. In what a state of fright he must have been, if it is true, as is related, that, stopping on the way at Castelnuovo at the house of the ex-gonfaloniere Capponi, he gave him such a shock by his narratives that the old man died a few days afterwards! [2]

On September 23 Michael Angelo was at Ferrara. In his excitement he refused the hospitality which the Duke offered him at his castle and continued his flight. On September 25 he reached Venice. The Seigniory, informed of his arrival, sent two noblemen to him with instructions to place everything at his disposal of which he might be in need; but, ashamed and unsociable, he refused their offer and withdrew out of the way to

[1] Letter from Michael Angelo to Battista della Palla. (September 25, 1529.)

[2] Segni.

Giudecca. He felt that he was not yet sufficiently far away. His idea was to flee to France. On the very day of his arrival in Venice he sent an anxious and trembling letter to Battista della Palla, the agent whom Francis I. had appointed in France for the purchase of works of art.

"Battista, very dear friend," he wrote, "I have left Florence to go to France, and, on reaching Venice, I have made inquiries as to the route. They tell me that, to go there, I must pass over German territories, which is dangerous and difficult for me. Do you still intend to go there? . . . I beg you to inform me and say where you would like me to wait for you. We will travel together . . . I beg you to reply to me on receiving this letter and as soon as possible, for I am burning with a desire to go there. And if you no longer wish to go, tell me, so that I may decide, cost what it may, to go alone. . . ."[1]

The French Ambassador in Venice, Lazare de Baïf, hastened to write to Francis I. and to the Connétable de Montmorency, pressing them to profit by the opportunity to attach Michael Angelo to the Court of France. The King immediately offered Michael Angelo an allowance and a house. But this exchange of letters naturally took a certain time, and when Francis' offer came the artist had already returned to Florence.

His feverish excitement had abated. Amidst the silence of Giudecca he had had the leisure to blush at his fear. His flight had produced a great sensation in Florence. On September 30 the Seigniory decreed that all who had fled should be banished, as rebels, unless they

[1] Letter from Michael Angelo to Battista della Palla. (September 25, 1529.)

returned before October 7. On this date the fugitives were declared to be rebels and their property was confiscated. However, Michael Angelo's name did not yet appear on the list. The Seigniory granted him a further delay, and the Florentine Ambassador in Ferrara, Galeotto Giugni, informed the Republic that Michael Angelo had heard of the decree too late, and that he was ready to return if they would pardon him. The Seigniory promised, and by the hand of the marble-cutter Bastiano di Francesco sent a safe conduct to Venice. Bastiano at the same time handed Michael Angelo ten letters from friends, all of whom implored him to return.[1] One of them was an appeal, full of love for the fatherland, from the generous Battista della Palla.

"All your friends, without distinction of opinion, without hesitating and with a single voice," he wrote, "exhort you to return, in order to preserve your life, your country, your friends, your property and your honour, as well as to enjoy the new times which you so ardently desired."

He believed that the golden age had returned for Florence, and doubted not that the good cause had triumphed. But the unfortunate man, after the return of the Medici, was to be one of the first victims of the reaction.

His words caused Michael Angelo to make up his mind. The sculptor returned, but slowly; for Battista della Palla, who had gone to Lucca to meet him, waited many days for him and at last began to despair of ever seeing him.[2] At last, on November 20, Michael Angelo re-entered

[1] October 22, 1529.

[2] He wrote him fresh letters, imploring him to return.

Florence.[1] On the 23rd his sentence of banishment was annulled by the Seigniory, but it was decided that the Grand Council should be closed to him for three years.[2]

Henceforth Michael Angelo did his duty bravely. He went back to his post at San Miniato, which the enemy had been bombarding for a month. He again fortified the hill, invented new engines of war, and, it is said, saved the "Campanile" by protecting it with bales of wool and mattresses suspended by cords.[3] The last trace which we have of his activity during the siege is a piece of news of February 22, 1530, which describes him climbing on to the dome of the Cathedral, either to observe the movements of the enemy or to inspect the condition of the cupola.

However, the misfortunes which he had foreseen occurred. On August 2, 1530, Malatesta Baglione betrayed the city. Florence capitulated on the twelfth, and the Emperor handed it over to the papal commissary, Baccio Valori. Then the executions began. In the

[1] Four days before, his allowance had been suppressed by the Seigniory.

[2] According to a letter from Michael Angelo to Sebastiano del Piombo he had also to pay a fine of 1500 ducats to the Commune.

[3] "When the Pope Clement and the Spaniards besieged Florence," related Michael Angelo to Francis of Holland, "the enemy were long arrested by the machines which I had constructed on the towers. One night I covered the exterior of the walls with sacks of wool; on another, I had trenches dug and filled with powder to burn the Castilians. I had their torn members blown into the air . . . There, that is what painting is good for! It is good for machines and instruments of war; it is good for giving bombardes and arquebuses a convenient form; it is good for building bridges and ladders; it is especially good for the plans and proportions of fortresses, bastions, trenches, mines, and countermines . . ." (Francis of Holland's "Dialogue on Painting in the City of Rome." Third part, 1549.)

early days nothing stayed the vengeance of the conquerors. Michael Angelo's best friends, including Battista della Palla, were the first to suffer. Michael Angelo hid himself, it is said, in the steeple of San Niccolò-oltr' Arno. He had good reasons for fear: the news had got abroad that he had intended to demolish the Palace of the Medici. But Clement VII. had not lost his affection for him. If we are to believe Sebastiano del Piombo, he had been deeply grieved by what he heard of Michael Angelo during the siege; but he contented himself with shrugging his shoulders and saying, "Michael Angelo is in the wrong; never have I harmed him."[1] As soon as the anger of the proscribers was beginning to subside, Clement VII. wrote to Florence, directing that Michael Angelo should be found and, if he were willing to continue work on the tombs of the Medici, treated with all the respect he merited.[2]

Michael Angelo came out from his hiding-place and resumed his work to the glory of those against whom he had fought. The unfortunate man did more: for Baccio Valori, the man who did the Pope's dirty work, the murderer of his friend Battista della Palla, he consented to carve his statue of "Apollo drawing an Arrow from his Quiver."[3] Soon he was to disown the banished Florentines.[4] Lamentable weakness on the part of a great man, forced to defend the life of his artistic dreams by acts of cowardice and against the murderous brutality of material strength, which could, at its will, have stifled

[1] Letter from Sebastiano del Piombo to Michael Angelo. (April 29, 1531.)

[2] Condivi. Michael Angelo's allowance had been re-established by the Pope on December 11, 1530.

[3] Autumn 1530. This work is in the Museo Nazionale in Florence.

[4] In 1544.

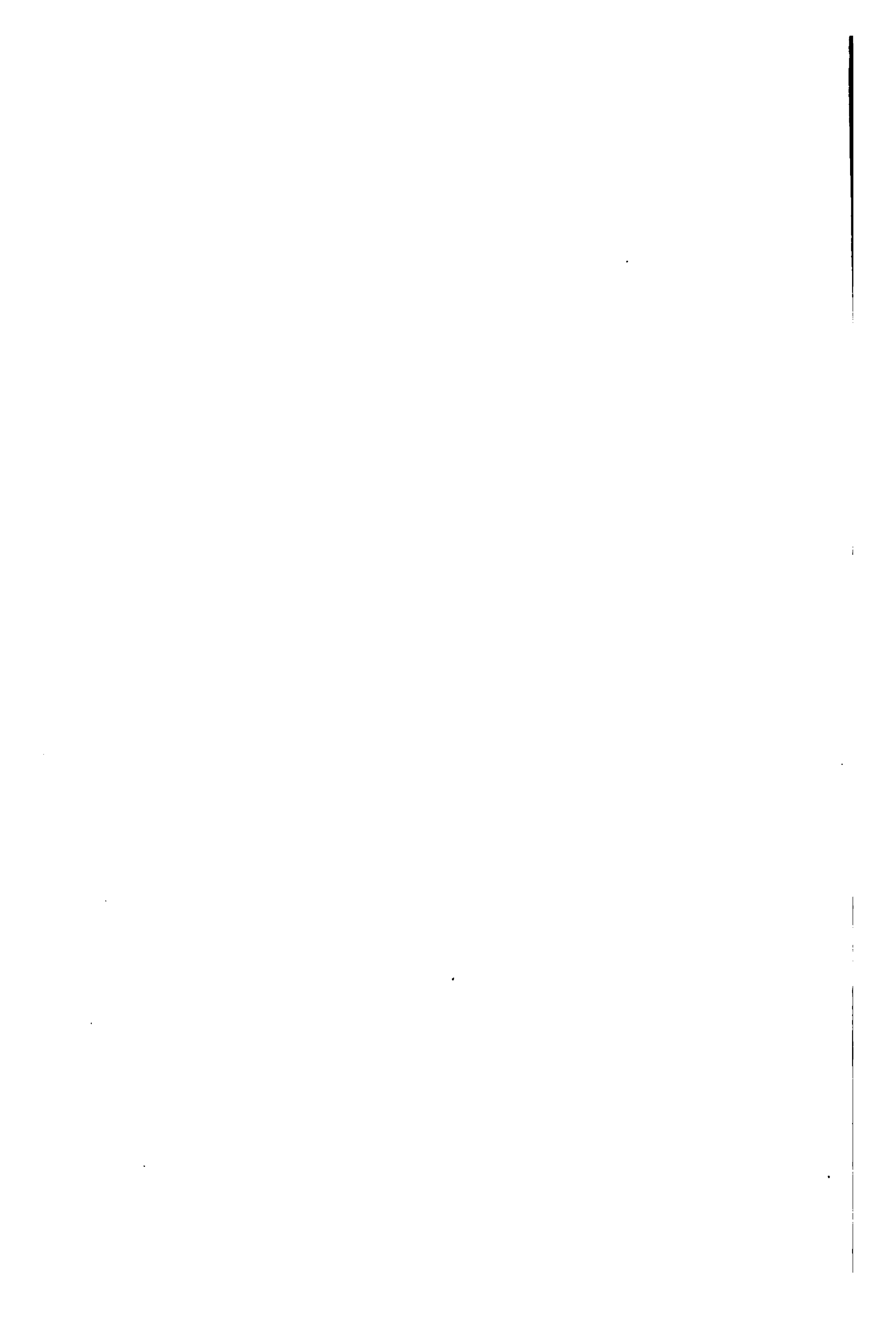
him! It is not without reason that he was to devote the whole of the end of his life to the work of raising a superhuman monument to the Apostle Peter. More than once, like him, must he have wept on hearing the crowing of the cock.

Forced into lying, reduced to flattering a Valori and to celebrating a Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, he was consumed with sorrow and shame. He threw himself into his work, put into it all his useless rage.[1] He did not carve the Medici, but statues representing his despair. When the lack of resemblance in his portraits of Julian and Lorenzo de' Medici was pointed out to him, he superbly replied, "Who will see it ten centuries hence?" One of them he called "Action"; the other, "Thought"; and the statues of the pedestal, which formed a commentary—"Day" and "Night," "Dawn" and "Twilight"—express all the exhausting suffering of life and his disdain of all things. These immortal symbols of human sorrow were finished in

[1] During these same years, the darkest of his life, Michael Angelo, through a savage reaction of his nature against the Christian pessimism which stifled him, executed some works noteworthy for their audacious paganism, such as his "Leda caressed by the Swan" (1529–1530), which, painted for the Duke of Ferrara, then given by Michael Angelo to his pupil Antonio Mini, was taken by the latter to France, where it was destroyed, it is said, about 1643, by Sublet des Noyers, owing to its lasciviousness. A little later Michael Angelo painted for Bartolommeo Bettini a cartoon of "Venus caressed by Cupid," from which Pontormo painted a picture, which is in the Uffizi. Other drawings, grandiose and severe in their indecency, probably belong to the same period. Charles Blanc describes one of them, "in which we see the transports of joy of a ravished woman, who struggles lustily against her stronger ravisher, but not without expressing an involuntary feeling of happiness and pride."

THE LIBYAN SYBIL

From the Sistine Chapel



1531.[1] Supreme irony! Nobody understood them. A Giovanni Strozzi, seeing the formidable "Night," composed such epigrams as the following:

"Night, whom you see so sweetly sleeping in this stone, was by an Angel carved, and since she sleeps, she lives: if you believe me not, awake her, and she will speak."[2]

Michael Angelo replied:

"Sleep is dear to me, but dearer still to me it is to be a stone, while shame is shameless and while crimes bear sway. To neither see nor hear is my good fortune, therefore rouse me not, but speak low."[3]

"Is all heaven deep in slumber," he cries in another poem, "since a single being has appropriated the wealth of so many men?"

And the enslaved Florence replies to his moans:[4]

"Be not troubled in your holy thoughts. He who

[1] "Night" was probably carved in the autumn of 1530 and finished in the spring of 1531; "Dawn" in September 1531; "Twilight" and "Day" a little later. (*See* Dr. Ernst Steinmann's "Das Geheimnis der Medicigräber Michel Angelos," 1907, Hiersemann, Leipzig.)

[2] "La notte che tu vedi in si dolci atti
Dormir, fu da un Angelo scolpita.
In questo sasso, e perche dorme, ha vita:
Destala se nol credi, e parleratti."

Caro m'è 'l sonno et piu l'esser di sasso,
Mentre che 'l danno e la vergogna dura.
Non veder, non sentir m'è gran ventura;
Pero non mi destar, deh! parla basso!"
(Poems, cix, 16, 17. Frey dates them 1545.)

[4] Michael Angelo imagines a dialogue between Florence and the banished Florentines.

thinks that he has robbed you of me does not benefit by his great crime because of his great fear. The fulness of pleasure, which extinguishes desire, is a less joy to lovers than misery, which is full of hope." [1]

We must try to imagine what the sack of Rome and the fall of Florence meant to the men of those days: the bankruptcy of justice—the most terrible of cataclysms. Many never recovered from it.

Men like Sebastiano del Piombo became laughingly sceptical.

"I have reached such a point that, for all I care, the world may come to an end. I laugh at everything . . . It does not seem to me that I am still the Bastiano I was before the sack. I cannot recover myself." [2]

Michael Angelo thought of committing suicide.

"If ever it is permissible to kill oneself, it would indeed be just that this right should belong to the one who, though full of faith, lives in slavery and misery." [3]

His mind was thoroughly upset. In June 1531 he

[1] "Poems," cix, 48. (*See* Appendix, vii.)

[2] Letter from Sebastiano del Piombo to Michael Angelo (February 24, 1531). It was the first letter which he wrote to him after the sack of Rome. "God knows how glad I have been that, after so many miseries, troubles, and dangers, the all-powerful Lord, through his mercifulness and pity, has left us living and in good health—a truly miraculous thing, when I think of it . . . Now, my friend, that we have passed through fire and water, and supported unimaginable things, let us thank God, and spend the little life which remains to us as much as possible in rest. We must count very little on what Fortune will do for us, so wicked and painful is she. . . ."

Their letters were being opened. So Sebastiano recommended Michael Angelo, who was a suspect, to disguise his writing.

[3] "Poems," xxxviii. (*See* Appendix, viii.)

fell ill. Clement VII. tried in vain to appease him. Through his secretary and Sebastiano del Piombo, he advised him not to overwork himself, to show restraint, to work at his ease, to take a walk now and then, and not reduce himself to the state of a labourer.[1] In the autumn of 1531 they feared for his life. One of his friends wrote to Valori: "Michael Angelo is extenuated and emaciated. I spoke about him recently with Bugiardini and Antonio Mini, and we came to the conclusion that, unless he is seriously looked after, he will not live long. He works too much, eats little and badly, and sleeps still less. For the past year he has been racked with pains in his head and heart."[2] Clement VII. grew alarmed, and, on November 21, 1531, issued a brief forbidding Michael Angelo, under pain of excommunication, to work at anything else than the mausoleum of Julius II. and that of the Medici,[3] in order to husband his health and thus be able "to glorify Rome, his family and himself all the longer."

He protected him against the importunities of men like Valori and the rich beggars who, according to the custom of those days, came to beg for works of art and imposed fresh commissions upon him. "When they ask you for a picture," he wrote to him, "you ought to attach your brush to your foot, make four strokes, and say, 'the picture is painted.'"[4] He interposed between

[1] ". . . Non voria che ve fachinasti tanto. . . ." (Letter from Pier Paolo Marzi to Michael Angelo, June 20, 1531.) *Cf.* letter from Sebastiano del Piombo to Michael Angelo. (June 16, 1531.)

[2] Letter from Giovanni Battista di Paolo Mini to Valori. (September 29, 1531.)

[3] ". . . Ne aliquo modo laborare debeas, nisi in sepultura et opera nostra, quam tibi commisimus. . . ."

[4] Letter from Benvenuto della Volpaja to Michael Angelo. (November 26, 1531.)

Michael Angelo and the heirs of Julius II., who were becoming threatening.[1] In 1532 a fourth contract was signed between the representatives of the Duke of Urbino and Michael Angelo on the subject of the mausoleum, the latter promising to make a new model of the monument, very reduced in size,[2] to complete it in three years, and to pay all the expenses, as well as 2000 ducats, in view of what he had already received from Julius II. and his heirs. "It will suffice," wrote Sebastiano del Piombo to Michael Angelo, "if a little of your odour (*un poco del vostro odore*) is found in the work."[3] Sad conditions, since, in signing them, Michael Angelo was confessing to the failure of his great project, and had to pay into the bargain! But, in truth, from year to year it was the failure of his life, the failure of life itself, to which Michael Angelo subscribed in each of his despairing works.

After the project for the monument of Julius II., it was that for the tombs of the Medici which came to nothing. On September 25, 1534, Clement VII. died. Michael Angelo—fortunately for him—was then absent from Florence. For a long time past he had lived there in a state of anxiety, for Duke Alessandro de' Medici hated him. But for the respect which this prince had for the Pope he would have had the sculptor killed.[4]

[1] "If you had not the Pope's protection," wrote Sebastiano to him, "they would dart like serpents" ("Saltariano come serpenti"). (March 15, 1532.)

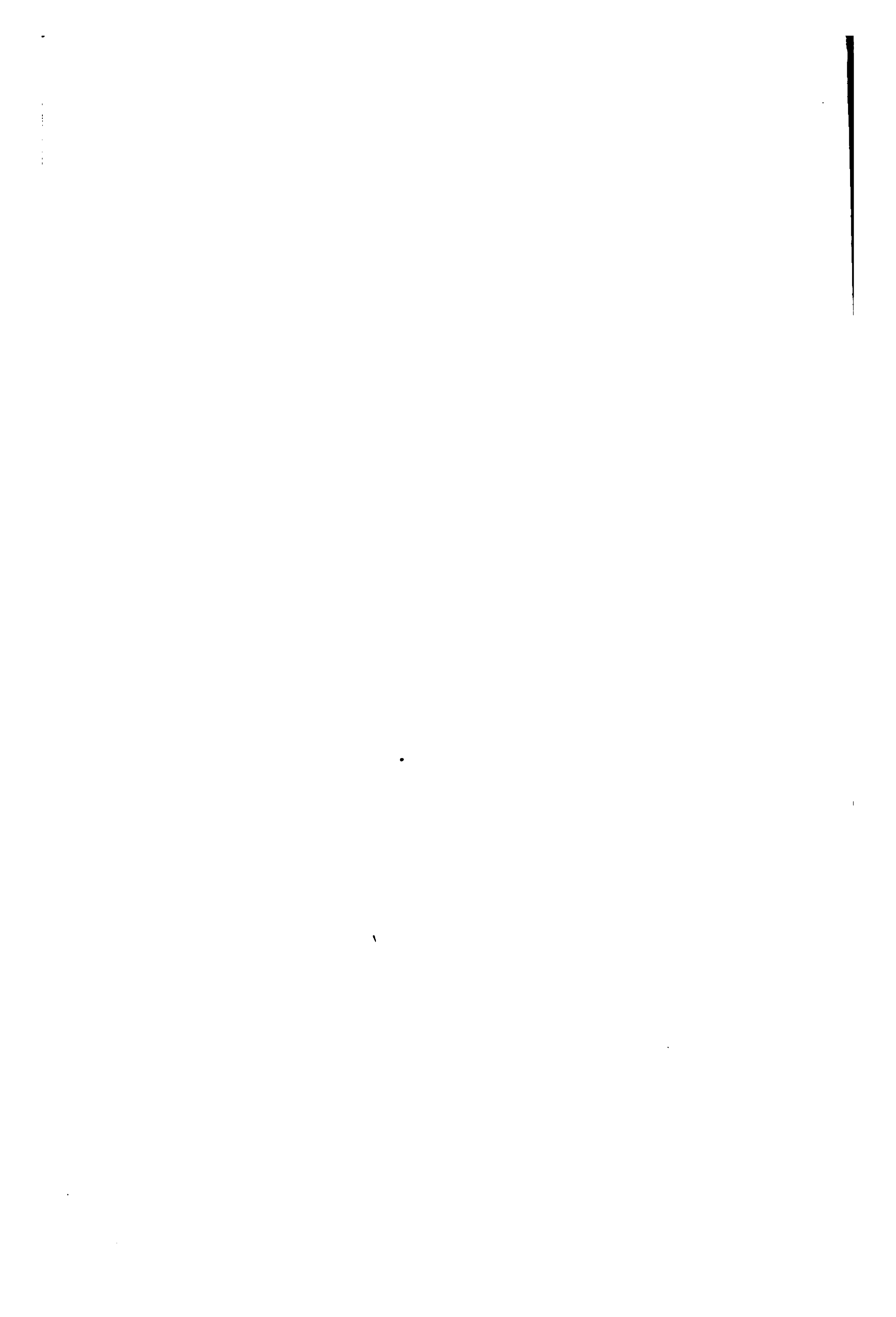
[2] But six statues, some commenced, others unfinished (doubtless the "Moses," the "Victory," the "Slaves," and the figures of the Boboli grotto) were now to be delivered for the mausoleum, which was to be erected at San Pietro in Vincoli.

[3] Letter from Sebastiano del Piombo to Michael Angelo. (April 6, 1532.)

[4] Many times had Clement VII. to defend Michael Angelo

VICTORY

From the group in the National Museum, Florence



His enmity had still further increased since Michael Angelo's refusal to contribute to the servitude of Florence by building a fortress to dominate the town—an act of courage which shows sufficiently clearly, in the case of this timorous man, the grandeur of his love for his native city. Since then Michael Angelo feared everything on the part of the Duke, and he only owed his salvation, when Clement VII. died, to the chance of being away from Florence at that moment.[1] He did not return. He was, indeed, never to see it again. It was all over with the Medici chapel—it was never completed. The monument we know under that name is but remotely connected with the one which Michael Angelo had imagined. Barely the skeleton of the mural decoration remains. Not only had Michael Angelo not executed half the statues[2] and the paintings which he had in view,[3] but when, later, his disciples endeavoured to discover and carry out his thoughts, he was no longer even capable of telling them what these had been.[4] He had abandoned all his enterprises so completely that he had forgotten everything.

against his nephew, the Duke Alessandro. Sebastiano del Piombo related to Michael Angelo a scene of this kind, in which "the Pope spoke with such vehemence, fury, and resentment, in terms so terrible, that it is not permissible to write them down." (August 16, 1533.)

[1] Condivi.

[2] Michael Angelo had executed, partially, seven statues (the two tombs of Lorenzo d'Urbino and of Julien de Nemours, and the Madonna). He had not commenced the four statues representing Rivers, which he intended to make; and he abandoned to others the figures for the tombs of Lorenzo the Magnificent and of Julien, Lorenzo's brother.

[3] Vasari asked Michael Angelo on March 17, 1563, "what his plans had been regarding the mural paintings."

[4] It was not even known where the statues already finished were to be placed, nor what statues he had intended to place in the empty niches. In vain did Vasari and Ammanati, com-

On September 23, 1534, Michael Angelo returned to Rome, where he was to remain until his death. It was twenty-one years since he had left it. In these twenty-one years he had made three statues for the uncompleted mausoleum of Julius II., seven unfinished statues for the uncompleted monument of the Medici, the unfinished vestibule of the "Laurenziana," the unfinished "Christ" of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, the unfinished "Apollo" for Baccio Valori. He had lost his health, his energy, his faith in art and in the fatherland. He had lost his favourite brother.[1] He had lost the father whom he adored.[2] To the memory of both he had addressed a poem (unfinished, like everything he did) admirable for its note of sorrow and its passionate yearning after death.

". . . Heaven has snatched you from our wretchedness. Have pity on me, I who live, like a dead man. . . . You are dead to death and have become divine. You no longer feel the fear of a change of being and desire. I can hardly write of it without envy. Destiny and Time, which bring us but doubtful joy and sure misfortune, no longer dare to cross your threshold. No cloud obscures your light; the course of the hours lays not violent hands upon you; necessity and chance guide not your steps. Night obscures not your splendour; Day, however bright, heightens it not . . . By thy death, dear father, I learn how to die . . . Death is not, as people believe, the worst thing, for the last day is the

missioned by Duke Cosmo I. to complete Michael Angelo's work, apply to him. He could remember nothing. "Memory and mind have outstripped me," he wrote in August 1557, "to await me in the other world."

[1] Buonarroto, who died of the plague in 1528.

[2] In June 1534.

first—the eternal day—near to the throne of God. There I hope and believe I shall see you once more, if, by the grace of God, my mind snatches my frozen heart from the terrestrial mud, and if, like every virtue, perfect love increases in heaven between father and son." [1]

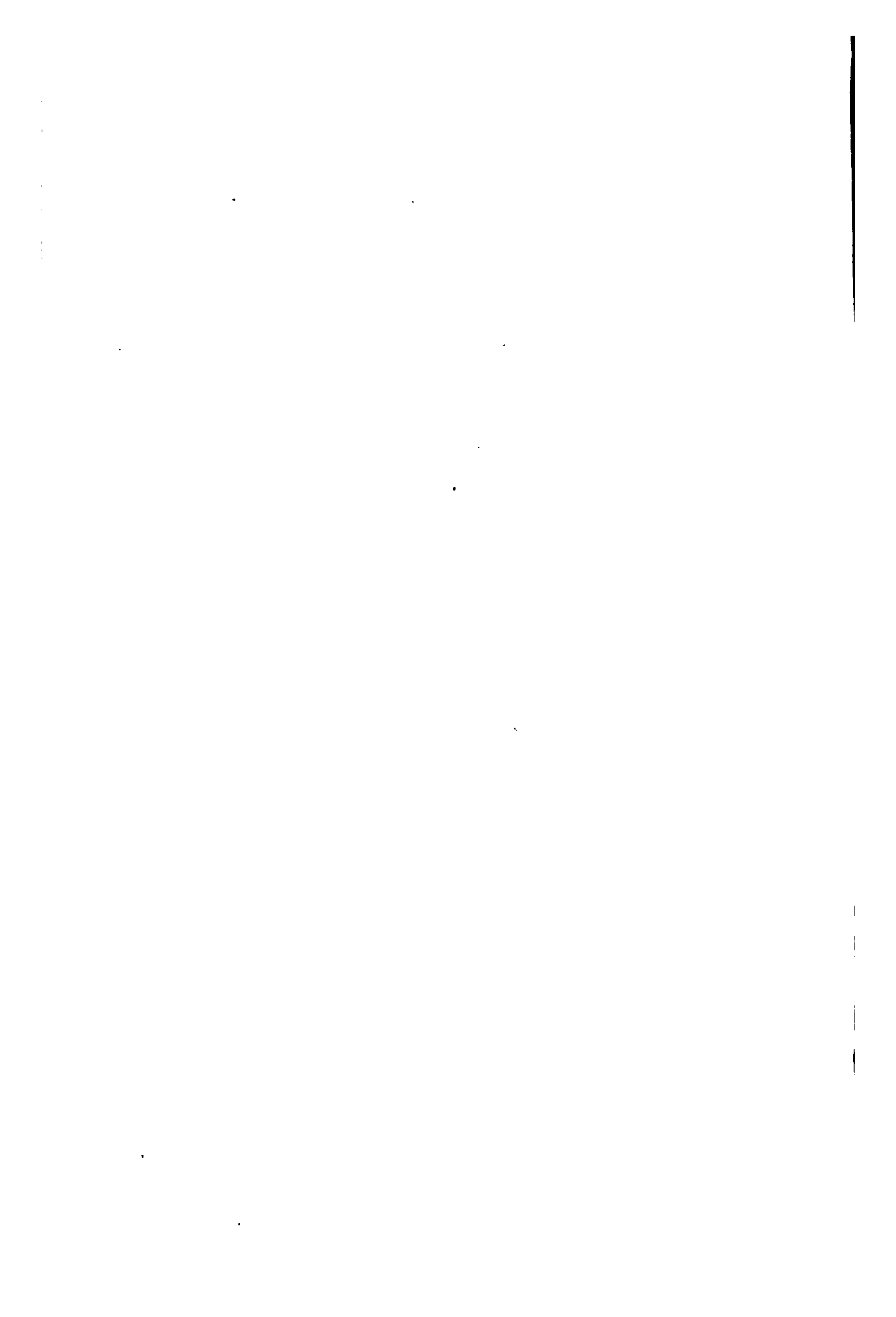
Nothing, then, retained him any longer upon earth: neither art, nor ambition, nor tenderness, nor hope of any kind. He was sixty years of age and his life seemed to be over. He was alone. He had lost all faith in his works. He yearned after death; his passionate desire was at last to escape from "the change of being and desire," from "the violence of the hours," from the tyranny "of necessity and chance."

"Alas! alas! I am betrayed by my days which have fled . . . Too long have I waited . . . Time has passed and here I find myself in years. I neither can prepare nor repent now that Death treads upon my steps . . . I weep in vain, for he who loses time can know no greater loss. . . .

"Alas! alas! in retrospect I find not a single day that I can call my own. Fallacious hopes and vain desires (I recognise it now) have kept me weeping, loving, burning and sighing (for not a mortal affection has been unknown to me) far from Truth. . . .

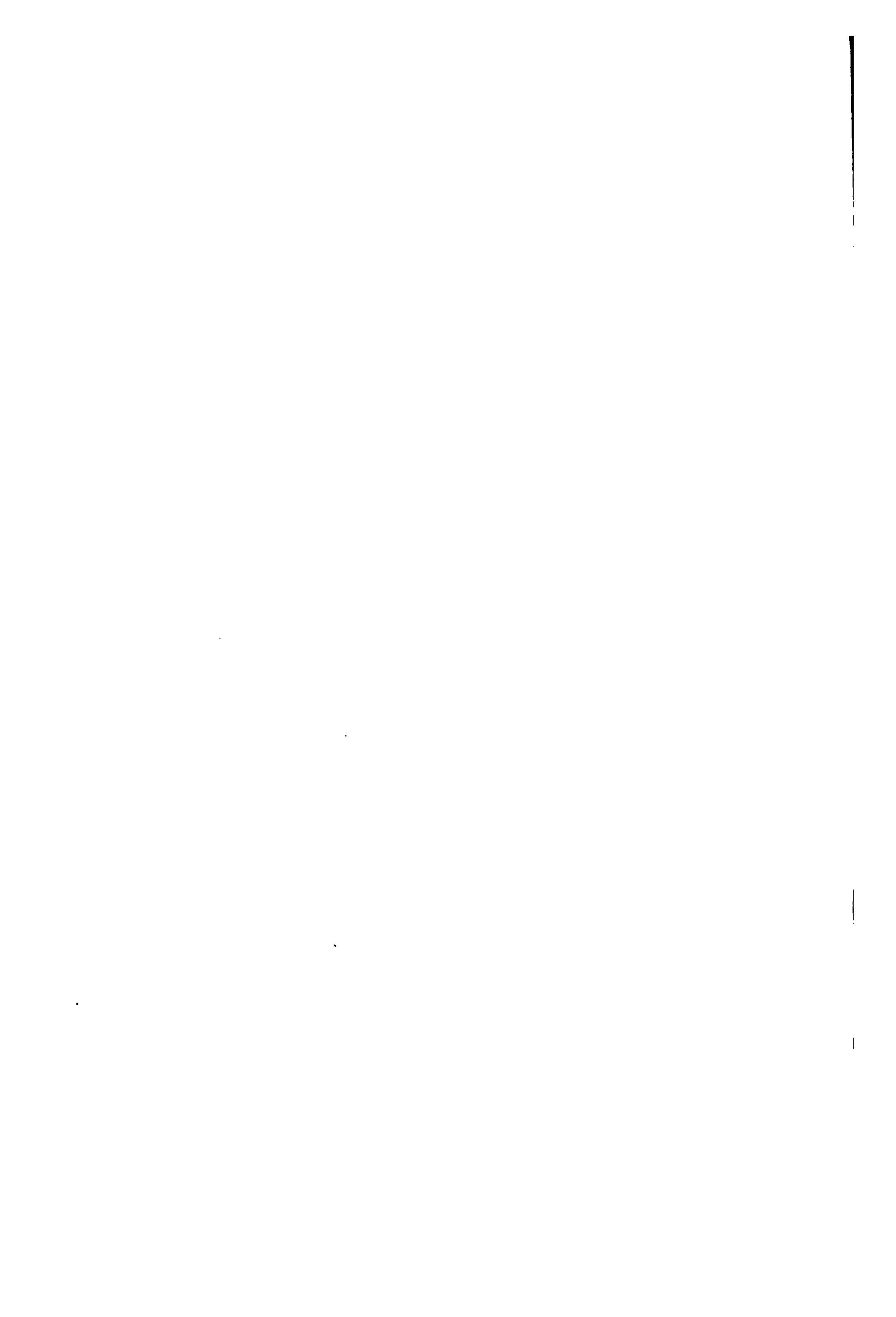
"Alas! alas! I go, but do not well know where. Fear is upon me . . . And if I am not deceived (O God, grant that I am!) I see, O Lord, the eternal punishment for the evil which I have done in knowing prosperity. Hope alone is mine! . . ." [2]

[1] "Poems," lviii. (*See* Appendix, ix.)
[2] "Poems," xlix. (*See* Appendix, x.)



PART II

ABDICATION



I

LOVE

I'me la morte, in te la vita mia.[1]

After renouncing everything which kept him alive, a new life—like the spring which blossoms again—sprang up in Michael Angelo's devastated heart, and love burnt with a brighter flame. But it was a form of love in which there was hardly a trace of either egoism or sensuality. It consisted in the mystical adoration of the beauty of a Cavalieri, in the religious friendship of Vittoria Colonna —the passionate communion of two souls in God. It consisted, also, in paternal tenderness for his orphan nephews, in pity for the poor and the weak, and in holy charity.

Michael Angelo's love for Tommaso dei Cavalieri is calculated to disconcert the minds of many, whether honest or dishonest. Even in the Italy of the closing days of the Renaissance it gave rise to unpleasant interpretations, and Aretino made outrageous allusions to it.[2]

[1] "Poems," lix.

[2] Michael Angelo's great nephew, in the first edition of the *Rime*, in 1623, did not dare to publish the poems to Tommaso dei Cavalieri exactly. He left his readers to believe that they were addressed to a woman. Until the recent works of Scheffler and Symmonds, Cavalieri was regarded as an imaginary name, hiding the identity of Vittoria Colonna.

But the insults of an Aretino—such men are common to all ages—could not reach a Michael Angelo. "They formed in their hearts a Michelagniolo out of the stuff of which their own hearts was made." [1]

No one possessed a purer soul than Michael Angelo. No one had a more religious conception of love. "I have often heard him speak of love," says Condivi, "and those who were present used to say that Plato did not speak otherwise. For my part, I know not what Plato said of it; but this I know well, in my long and intimate intercourse with him, I have never heard him utter any but the most honourable words, which had the effect of calming in young men the inordinate desires which agitated them."

But there was nothing literary and cold in this Platonic idealism: it was united to a frenzy of thought which made Michael Angelo the prey of everything which he considered beautiful. He knew this himself, and said one day when refusing an invitation from his friend Giannotti:

"When I see a man who possesses some talent or gift of intelligence, a man who knows how to do or to say something better than the rest of the world, I am constrained to fall in love with him, and then I give myself so completely to him that I no longer belong to myself. . . You are all so highly gifted that if I accepted your invitation I should lose my liberty. Each of you would steal a portion of myself. Even the dancer and the lute player, if they were skilled in art, could do what they liked with me! Instead of being rested, fortified, calmed by your society, my soul would be torn and dispersed to

[1] Letter from Michael Angelo to an unknown person. (October 1542.) ("Letters," Milanesi's edition, cdxxxv.)

CHRIST CONDEMNING THE WICKED

Fragment of "The Last Judgment," in the Sistine Chapel

every wind that blows, so much so that for many days afterwards I should not know in what world I was moving." [1]

If he were thus overcome by beauty of thoughts, words or sounds, how much more so must he have been by bodily beauty !

> " La forza d'un bel viso a che mi sprona !
> C'altro non è c' al mondo mi dilecti . . ." [2]

To this great creator of admirable forms, and who at the same time was a great believer, a beautiful body was divine—a beautiful body was God Himself appearing under the veil of the flesh. Like Moses before the Burning Bush, he trembled on approaching. The object of his adoration was to him truly an idol, as he himself said. He threw himself at its feet ; and this voluntary humiliation of a great man, which was painful to the noble Cavalieri himself, was all the more strange because the idol with the beautiful face was often a vulgar and despicable being like Febo di Poggio. But Michael Angelo saw nothing of this . . . Did he really see nothing ? He had no desire to see anything ; he was completing in his heart the statue he had rough-hewn.

The earliest of these ideal lovers, of these living dreams, was Gherardo Perini, whose acquaintance with the sculptor dates from about 1522.[3]

[1] Donato Giannotti's "Dialogi," 1545.

[2] "Poems," cxxxxi. "The strength of a beautiful face, what a spur it is to me ! No other joy in the world is so great."

[3] Gherardo Perini was specially a mark for Aretino's attacks. Frey publishes a few very tender letters of his, of 1522, in which we read such phrases as the following : ". . . Che avendo di voi lettera, mi paia chon esso voi essere, che altro desiderio non o." "When I have a letter from you, I seem to be with you, which is my unique desire." He signed himself : " Vostro

Later, in 1533, Michael Angelo became enamoured of Febo di Poggio, and in 1544 it was the turn of Cecchino dei Bracci.[1] His friendship for Cavalieri was not, therefore, exclusive and unique. But it was durable, and it reached a height which, to a certain extent, was justified not only by the friend's beauty but by his moral nobility.

come figliuolo," "Yours like a son." A beautiful poem by Michael Angelo on the sorrow of absence and forgetfulness seems to be addressed to him: "Quite near here my love has ravished my heart and life. Here, his beautiful eyes promised me their aid, and then withdrew it. Here he bound me; here he unbound me. Here I have wept, and, with infinite sorrow, I have seen, from this stone, depart the one who has taken me from myself, and who desires me no longer." (*See* Appendix, xi. "Poems," xxxv.)

[1] Henry Thode, who, in his work on "Michael Angelo und das Ende der Renaissance," cannot resist the desire of depicting his hero in the brightest colours, even sometimes at the expense of truth, places his friendship for Gherardo Perini and Febo di Poggio in such an order as to rise by degrees to his friendship for Tommaso dei Cavalieri, because he cannot admit that Michael Angelo could have descended from the most perfect love to the affection of a Febo. But, in reality, Michael Angelo had already been in relation with Cavalieri for more than a year when he became enamoured of Febo and wrote him the humble letters (of December 1533 according to Thode, or of September 1534 according to Frey) and the absurd and raving poems in which he plays upon the words Febo and Poggio (Frey, ciii., civ.)—letters and poems to which the young scamp replied by demands for money. (*See* Frey's edition of the "Poems of Michael Angelo," p. 526.) As to Cecchino dei Bracci, the friend of his friend Luigi del Riccio, Michael Angelo did not know him until ten years after Cavalieri. Cecchino was the son of a banished Florentine, and died prematurely at Rome in 1544. In memory of him Michael Angelo wrote *forty-eight* funereal epigrams, full of idolatrous idealism, if one can use the phrase, and some of which are sublimely beautiful. These are perhaps the gloomiest poems which Michael Angelo ever wrote. (*See* Appendix, xii.)

"Far above all others, without comparison," says Vasari, "he loved Tommaso dei Cavalieri, a Roman noble, a young man devoted to art . . . Michael Angelo drew a life-size portrait of him, his first and last, for he abhorred drawing anything that was not of the utmost beauty."

Varchi adds:

"When I saw Messer Tommaso Cavalieri at Rome he was not only of incomparable beauty but possessed such grace of manner, such a distinguished mind and such nobility of conduct that he well merited being loved, and all the more so as one got to know him." [1]

Michael Angelo met him in Rome in the autumn of 1532. The first letter in which Cavalieri replies to Michael Angelo's impassioned declarations is full of dignity:

"I have received a letter from you, which has been all the dearer to me because it was unexpected. I say unexpected because I do not consider myself sufficiently worthy to be written to by a man such as you. As to what you have said in my praise, and as to these works of mine, for which you assure me you have felt no small sympathy, I reply that they were not of a nature to warrant a man with a genius like yours—a genius such as is, I will not say without a parallel, but without a rival upon earth—to write to a young man who has barely made his *début* and who is so ignorant. I cannot believe, however, that you lie. I believe, yes, I am certain, that the affection which you show me has no other cause than the love that a man like you, who is the personification of art, must necessarily have for those who devote themselves to art and love it. I am one of those, and as

[1] Benedetto Varchi's "Due lezzioni," 1549.

regards love of art I give place to no one. I amply return your affection—that I promise you. Never have I loved a man more than you, never have I desired a friendship more than yours . . . I beg you to make use of me, should an opportunity offer, and eternally recommend myself to you.

"Yours very devotedly,
"THOMAO CAVALIERI."[1]

Cavalieri seems to have ever maintained this tone of respectful and reserved affection. He remained faithful to Michael Angelo until his last hour, at which he was present. He retained his confidence; he was the only one who was reputed to have any influence over him, and he possessed the rare merit of having always used it for his friend's benefit and grandeur. He it was who made Michael Angelo decide to complete the wooden model of the cupola of St. Peter's. He it was who preserved Michael Angelo's plans for the construction of the Capitol, and who worked at their realisation. He it was, finally, who, after the death of the sculptor, saw that his wishes were carried out.

But Michael Angelo's friendship for him resembled the passion of love. He wrote him frenzied letters: addressed his idol with his head bowed down to the dust.[2]

[1] Letter from Tommaso dei Cavalieri to Michael Angelo. (January 1, 1533.)

[2] See especially the reply which Michael Angelo made to Cavalieri's first letter, on the very day on which he received it. (January 1, 1533.) There are three rough drafts of this letter, all feverish in their style. In a post-scriptum to one of them Michael Angelo writes: "It would be quite permissible to give the name of the thing which one man presents to another who receives it; but out of respect for propriety it does not appear in this letter." It is evident that the word in question was—love.

He called him "a powerful genius . . . a miracle . . . . the light of our century"; he implored him "not to despise him, because he could not compare himself to him—he who was without an equal!" He laid the whole of his present and the whole of his future at his feet, and added:

"It is an infinite sorrow to me not to be able to give you my past also, in order to serve you all the longer. For the future will be short. I am too old. . . .[1] I do not believe that anything can destroy our friendship, although I speak in a very presumptuous fashion, for I am infinitely beneath you. . . .[2] I could as easily forget your name as the nourishment on which I live; yes, I could as easily forget the nourishment on which I live, and which only sustains the body, without pleasure, as your name, which nourishes the body and the soul, and fills them with such sweetness that as long as I think of you I feel neither suffering nor the fear of death.[3] My soul is in the hands of the one to whom I have given it. . . .[4] If I were to cease thinking of him I believe that I should fall dead on the spot."[5]

He made superb presents to Cavalieri:

"Stupendous designs and heads in black and red chalk, which he had made with the intention of teaching him how to draw. Then he drew for him a Rape of Ganymede, the Vulture eating the Heart of Tityrus, the Fall of the Chariot of the Sun in the Po, and a Bacchanalia of Infants, all most rare and unique."[6]

[1] Letter from Michael Angelo to Cavalieri (January 1, 1533).
[2] Rough draft of a letter from Michael Angelo to Cavalieri (July 28, 1533).
[3] Letter from Michael Angelo to Cavalieri (July 28, 1533).
[4] Letter from Michael Angelo to Bartolommeo Angiolini.
[5] Letter from Michael Angelo to Sebastiano del Piombo.
[6] Vasari.

He also sent him sonnets, sometimes admirable, often obscure, and some of which were soon recited in literary circles and known all over Italy.[1] The following sonnet has been styled "the finest lyric poem that Italy produced in the sixteenth century": [2]

"With your beautiful eyes I see a gentle light, which my blind eyes can see no longer. Your feet assist me to bear a load which my crippled feet can support no longer. I feel that, through your mind, I am raised to heaven. *My* will is centred in *your* will. *My* thoughts re formed in *your* heart and *my* words in *your* breath. bandoned to myself, I am like the moon, which is invisible in the sky as long as the sun shines." [3]

Still more celebrated is this other sonnet, one of the finest poems which has ever been written in honour of perfect friendship:

"If a chaste love, if a superior devotion, if an equal fortune exist between two lovers, if cruel fate in striking

[1] Varchi commented on two of them in public, and published them in his "Due Lezzioni." Michael Angelo made no secret of his love. He spoke of it to Bartolommeo Angiolini and Sebastiano del Piombo. No one was astonished at such friendships. When Cecchino del Bracci died, Riccio proclaimed his love and despair from the housetops. "Ah! friend Donato!" he said. "Our Cecchino is dead. All Rome is in tears. Michael Angelo is making the drawing of a monument for me. I beg you to compose an epitaph and send me a consoling letter. My mind is drowned in sorrow. Patience! Each hour I live with a thousand thousand dead! O God! how Fortune has changed her face!" (letter to Donato Giannotti, January 1544). "I bear a thousand souls of lovers in my breast," Michael Angelo makes Cecchino say in one of his funereal epigrams ("Poems," Frey's edition, lxxiii, 12).

[2] Scheffler.

[3] "Poems," cix, 19. (*See* Appendix, xiii.)

one strikes the other, if a single mind, if a single will governs two hearts, if a soul in two bodies has become eternal, bearing both to heaven on the same wings, if Cupid with a single golden shaft pierces and burns the heart of both at once, if one loves the other and neither loves himself, if both centre their pleasure and their joy in attaining the same end, if a thousand thousand loves are not a hundredth part of the love and faith which binds them, could a movement of vexation ever shatter and untie such a bond ? "[1]

This forgetfulness of self, this ardent gift of his whole being, which melted in that of the beloved one, was not always characterised by this serenity. Sadness once more got the upper hand, and the soul, possessed by love, struggled and moaned.

"I weep, I burn, I am consumed, and my heart nourishes itself on its troubles. . . ."[2]

"You who have taken from me the joy of living," he says elsewhere to Cavalieri.[3]

To these over-passionate poems, Cavalieri, "the gentle and beloved lord,"[4] opposed his calm and affectionate coldness.[5] Secretly he was shocked by the exaggeration of this friendship. Michael Angelo made excuses :

[1] "Poems," xliv. (*See* Appendix, xiv).

[2] "I' piango, i' ardo, i' mi consumo, e 'l core
Di questo si nutriscie. . . ."

"Poems," lii. *See also* lxxvi. At the end of the sonnet Michael Angelo plays on Cavalieri's name, as follows :

"Resto prigion d'un Cavalier armato"
(I am the prisoner of an armed knight).

[3] "Onde al mio viver lieto, che m'ha tolto. . . ." "Poems," cix, 18.

[4] "Il desiato mie dolce signiore . . ." The same, l.

[5] "Un freddo aspetto . . ." The same, cix, 18.

"My dear lord, do not be irritated by my love, which is addressed only to what is best in you.[1] For the spirit of the one ought to be enamoured of the spirit of the other. That which I desire, that which I learn in your beautiful face, cannot be understood by ordinary men. He who wishes to understand it must first of all die."[2]

And certainly there was nothing immodest in this passion for beauty.[3] But the secret of this ardent and agitated love[4] (yet for all that chaste) was nevertheless disquieting and deluded.

To these morbid friendships—a despairing effort to deny the nothingness of his life and create the love for which he craved—there fortunately succeeded the serene affection of a woman, who could understand this old child, alone and lost in the world, and bring to his bruised soul a little peace, a little confidence, a little reason, and the melancholy acceptance of life and death.

It was in 1533 and 1534[5] that Michael Angelo's friendship for Cavalieri reached its height. In 1535 he began to know Vittoria Colonna.

She was born in 1492. Her father was Fabrizio Colonna, Lord of Paliano and Prince of Tagliacozzo.

[1] The exact text says: "That which you yourself love the best in yourself."

[2] *See* Appendix, xv.

[3] "Il foco onesto, che m'arde . . ." ("Poems," l).

"La casta voglia, che 'l cor dentro infiamma . . ." (The same, xliii).

[4] In a sonnet Michael Angelo expressed a wish that his skin might serve to clothe the one he loved. He wished to be the shoes which covered his snow-like feet. (*See* Appendix, xvi.)

[5] Especially between June and October 1533, when Michael Angelo, having returned to Florence, was at a distance from Cavalieri.

YOUNG WOMAN WEARING A HELMET

From the drawing in the Uffizi Gallery

Her mother, Agnese di Montefeltro, was daughter of the great Federigo, Prince of Urbino. Her family was one of the noblest in Italy, one of those in whom the luminous spirit of the Renaissance was in the highest degree manifest. At seventeen years of age she married the Marquis of Pescara, Ferrante Francesco d'Avalos, a great general and the conqueror of Pavia. She loved him, but her love was not returned. She was not a beautiful woman.[1] The medals on which she is represented show that she possessed a virile, self-willed and rather hard face, with a high forehead, a long, straight nose, a short, morose, upper lip, a slightly protruding lower lip, a tightly-shut mouth and a prominent chin.[2]

[1] The beautiful portraits which are said to represent her are not authentic. Take, for instance, the celebrated drawing of the Uffizi, in which Michael Angelo has represented a young woman wearing a helmet. The most that can be said is that, when drawing it, he was unconsciously influenced by the recollection of Vittoria, idealised and rejuvenated; for the face possesses Vittoria's regular features and her severe expression. The eyes are absorbed in thought and the look is hard. The neck is bare, the breasts uncovered. The expression is cold and concentrated in its violence.

[2] So is she represented on an anonymous medal reproduced in the "Carteggio di Vittoria Colonna," published by Ermanno Ferrero and Giuseppe Müller, and thus, doubtless, Michael Angelo saw her. Her hair is hidden by a large striped head-dress, and she wears a dress severely closed, with an indentation at the neck. Another anonymous medal represents her young and idealised. (Reproduced in Müntz's "Histoire de l'Art pendant la Renaissance," iii, p. 248, and in "L'Œuvre et la Vie de Michel-Ange," published by the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*.) Her hair is gathered up and tied above her forehead by means of a ribbon; a curl hangs down on her cheek and finely plaited tresses fall on her neck. Her forehead is high and straight; her eyes look with a somewhat indolent attention; her long, regular nose has broad nostrils; her cheeks are full, her ears large and well formed; her straight, strong chin is raised; her neck,

Filonico Alicarnasseo, who knew her and wrote her life, leaves one to understand, in spite of his care in the use of words, that she was ugly. "When she was married to the Marquis of Pescara," he says, "she applied herself to the development of her mental gifts; for, as she did not possess great beauty, she instructed herself in literature, in order to feel assured of that immortal beauty which, unlike the other, never fades." She was passionately intellectual. In a sonnet she herself says that "coarse senses, powerless to form the harmony which produces the pure love of noble souls, never awakened in her either pleasure or suffering. . . ." And she adds: "Bright flame, raise my heart so high that base thoughts offend it." She was in no way made to be

entwined with a light veil, is, like her breast, bare. She has a sulky and indifferent air.

These two medals, produced at different ages, have the following characteristics in common: a contraction of the nostrils and the somewhat sulky upper lip, and a small, tightly-closed, disdainful mouth. The face, as a whole, is expressive of a calm, without illusions and without joy.

Frey contends, in a somewhat hazardous manner, that he has discovered Vittoria's portrait in a strange drawing by Michael Angelo on the back of a sonnet—a beautiful and sad drawing which Michael Angelo would have refused, in that case, to show to any one. The figure is that of an aged woman, nude to the waist, and with empty, pendent breasts. The head has not grown old—it is upright, pensive, and proud. A necklace surrounds the long and delicate neck; the hair, gathered up, is enclosed in a cap, which is attached under the chin, hides the ears and forms a sort of helmet. Facing her the head of an old man, resembling Michael Angelo, looks at her—for the last time. Vittoria Colonna had just died when this drawing was made. The sonnet which accompanies it is the fine poem on the death of Vittoria commencing with the words: "Quand' el ministro de sospir mie tanti . . ." Frey has reproduced the drawing in his edition of the "Poems of Michael Angelo," p. 385.

loved by the brilliant and sensual Pescara, but, as the mocking Cupid sometimes ordains, she was made to love and suffer through it.

She did, in fact, suffer cruelly through the infidelity of her husband, who deceived her in his own house to the knowledge and in the sight of all Naples. Nevertheless, on his death in 1525, she was inconsolable. She sought refuge in religion and poetry. She led a claustral life, first at Rome, then in Naples,[1] but without renouncing in the early days thoughts of the world. She sought solitude merely in order to be able to absorb herself in the recollection of her love and celebrate it in verse. She was in relations with all the great writers of Italy—with Sadoleto, Bembo, and Castiglione, who entrusted the manuscript of his "Cortegiano" to her; with Ariosto, who celebrated her in his "Orlando"; with Paul Jove, Bernardo Tasso and Lodovico Dolce. From 1530 her sonnets were read over the whole of Italy and secured her a position of unique glory among the women of her period. Having retired to Ischia, she was indefatigable, in the solitude of the beautiful island and amidst the harmonious sea, in singing of her transfigured love.

But from 1534 religion occupied her entire attention. The spirit of Catholic reform—the free religious spirit which then tended to regenerate the Church without running the risk of a schism—took possession of her. Whether she knew Juan de Valdès[2] in Naples is unknown,

[1] Her spiritual counsellor at that time was Matteo Giberti, Bishop of Verona, who was one of the first to attempt the renovation of the Catholic Church. Giberti's secretary was the poet Francesco Berni.

[2] Juan de Valdès, the son of a private secretary of Charles V., and who established himself in Naples in 1534, was the head there of the reform party. Nobles and great ladies grouped

but she was overwhelmed by the sermons of Bernardino Ochino of Sienna;[1] she was the friend of Pietro Carnesecchi,[2] Giberti, Sadoleto, the noble Reginald Pole, and of the greatest of these reforming prelates, who constituted in 1536 the *Collegium de emendandâ Ecclesiâ*—namely, Cardinal Gaspare Contarini,[3] who tried in vain,

themselves around him. He published numerous works, the chief of which were the "Cento et dieci divine considerazioni" (Basle 1550) and an "Aviso sobre los interpretes de la Sagrada Escritura." He believed in justification through faith alone, and subordinated instruction by the Bible to illumination by the Holy Spirit. He died in 1541. It is said that he had more than three thousand followers in Naples.

[1] Bernardino Ochino, a great preacher and the Vicar-General of the Capucines in 1539, became the friend of Valdès, who came under his influence. In spite of denunciations, he continued his audacious sermons at Naples, Rome, and Venice, upheld by the people against the interdiction of the Church, until 1542, when, on the point of being punished as a Lutheran, he fled from Florence to Ferrara, and then to Geneva, where he became a Protestant. He was an intimate friend of Vittoria Colonna, and when about to leave Italy announced his resolution to her in a confidential letter.

[2] Pietro Carnesecchi, of Florence, prothonotary of Clement VII., the friend and disciple of Valdès, was summoned before the Inquisition in 1546 and was burnt in Rome in 1567. He remained in relations with Vittoria Colonna until her death.

[3] Gaspare Contarini, the member of a great Venetian family, was first Venetian Ambassador at the Court of Charles V., in the Netherlands, in Germany, and in Spain, and then, from 1528 to 1530, at the Court of Clement VII. He was appointed a Cardinal by Paul III. in 1535, and was legate in 1541 at the Diet of Ratisbonne. He did not succeed in coming to an understanding with the Protestants and he came under the suspicion of Catholics. He returned, discouraged, and died at Bologna in August 1542. He was the author of numerous works, such as "De immortalitate animæ," "Compendium primæ philosophiæ," and a treatise on "Justification," in which he came very near Protestant ideas concerning the question of grace.

at the Diet of Ratisbonne, to establish unity with the Protestants, and who dared to write these strong words:[1]

"The law of Christ is a law of liberty. . . . One cannot call by the name of government that the rule of which is the will of a man, inclined by nature to evil and impelled by innumerable passions. No! Every sovereignty is a sovereignty of reason. Its object is to lead those who are under its sway to their just goal—happiness—and by paths that are just. The authority of the Pope is also an authority of reason. A Pope should know that he exercises his authority over free men. He ought not to command, or defend, or dispense of his own will, but only in accordance with the rules of reason, the divine Commandments and Love—a rule which leads back everything to God and the common good."

Vittoria was one of the most exalted souls of this little idealistic group, which united the purest consciences of Italy. She corresponded with Renée of Ferrare and Margaret of Navarre; and Pier Paolo Vergerio, later a Protestant, called her "one of the lights of truth." But when the counter-reform movement began, under the direction of the merciless Caraffa,[2] she fell into mortal doubt. Like Michael Angelo, she had

[1] Quoted by Henry Thode.

[2] Giovanni Pietro Caraffa, Bishop of Chieti, founded in 1524 the Order of Theatines, and in 1528 began in Venice the work of counter-reform, which he was to continue with implacable rigour, first as a cardinal and then, in 1555, as Pope, under the title of Paul IV. The Order of the Jesuits was authorised in 1540; in July 1542 the Inquisition, with full powers against heretics, was established in Spain; and in 1545 the Council of Trent opened. This marked the end of the free Catholicism which had been dreamed of by the Contarinis, the Gibertis, and the Poles.

a passionate but weak soul: she felt a need to believe; she was incapable of resisting the authority of the Church. "She tortured herself by fasts and hair-shirts until she was nothing more than flesh and bone."[1] Her friend Cardinal Pole[2] restored her peace of mind by forcing her to submit, to humiliate the pride of her intelligence, to forget herself in God. She did so in a wild moment of sacrifice. . . . Ah! if she had only sacrificed herself! But she sacrificed her friends with her: she disowned Ochino, whose writings she delivered over to the Inquisition of Rome. Like Michael Angelo, her great soul was shattered by fear. She drowned her remorse in despairing mysticism.

"You have witnessed the chaos of ignorance in which I was," she wrote; "the labyrinth of errors in which I wandered, my body perpetually in movement to find repose and my soul ever agitated in its search for peace. God has willed that I should be told *Fiat lux!* and that I should be shown that I am nothing—that everything is in Christ!"[3]

[1] Deposition of Carnesecchi before the Inquisition in 1566.

[2] Reginald Pole, of the House of York, had had to flee from England, where he had entered into conflict with Henry VIII. He went to Florence in 1532, became the enthusiastic friend of Contarini, was made a Cardinal by Paul III., and legate of the patrimony of St. Peter. Possessed of great personal charm and a conciliatory spirit, he undertook the work of counter-reform and lead back to obedience many of the free minds of the Contarini group, who were about to join the ranks of the Protestants. Vittoria Colonna placed herself entirely under his direction at Viterbo from 1541 to 1544. In 1554 Pole returned to England as Papal legate and became Archbishop of Canterbury. He died in 1558.

[3] Letter from Vittoria Colonna to Cardinal Morone (December 22, 1543). For details regarding Vittoria Colonna see the work

She welcomed death as a deliverance. She died on February 25, 1547.

It was at the time she was most profoundly penetrated by the free mysticism of Valdès and Ochino that she made Michael Angelo's acquaintance. This woman, sad and tormented, who had ever need of a guide on whom to lean, had no less need of a weaker and more unfortunate being than herself on whom to expend the maternal love with which her heart was full. She endeavoured to hide her trouble from Michael Angelo. Serene in appearance, reserved, somewhat cold, she transmitted to him the peace which she demanded from others. Their friendship, which began about 1535, was intimate from the autumn of 1538, and entirely based on God. Vittoria was forty-six years of age; he was sixty-three. She lived in Rome, at the cloisters of San Silvestro in Capite, below Monte-Pincio. Michael Angelo lived near Monte Cavallo. They met on Sundays in the Church of San Silvestro on Monte Cavallo. Friar Ambrogio Caterino Politi read to them the Epistles of St. Paul, which they discussed together. The Portuguese painter, Francis of Holland, has handed down to us the recollection of these conversations in his four "Dialogues on Painting."[1] They form a living picture of this grave and tender friendship.

The first time that Francis of Holland went to the Church of San Silvestro he found the Marchesa di Pescara

of Alfred de Reumont and the second volume of Thode's "Michael Angelo."

[1] Francisco de Hollanda's "Quatre entretiens sur la peinture," held in Rome in 1538–1539, written down in 1548, and published by Joachim de Vasconcellos. French translation in "Les Arts en Portugal," by Comte A. Raczynski, 1846. Paris, Renouard.

there with a few friends, listening to the holy word. Michael Angelo was not of the company. When the Epistle was finished the amiable woman said to the stranger, with a smile:

"Francis of Holland would doubtless have more willingly heard a discourse of Michael Angelo than this sermon."

To which Francis—stupidly offended—replied:

"Indeed, Madame? Does it seem to your Excellency that I have sense for nothing else and am only good for painting?"

"Do not be so susceptible, Messer Francesco," said Lattanzio Tolomei. "The Marchesa is quite convinced that a painter is good for everything. So much do we Italians esteem painting! But perhaps she said that merely to add to the pleasure which you have had—that of hearing Michael Angelo."

Francis was then lost in apologies, and the Marchesa said to one of her servants:

"Go to Michael Angelo's and tell him that Messer Lattanzio and I have remained, after the close of the religious service, in this chapel, where it is agreeably cool. If he would consent to lose a little of his time, we should profit greatly. . . . But," she added, knowing Michael Angelo's unsociableness, "do not tell him that the Spaniard Francis of Holland is here."

Awaiting the servant's return they fell into conversation, endeavouring to find out by what means they could lead Michael Angelo to speak on the subject of painting, but without him suspecting their intention, for, if he

perceived it, he would immediately refuse to continue the conversation.

"There was a brief silence. A knock came at the door. We all expressed a fear, since the reply had come so promptly, that it could not be the master. But my star willed that Michael Angelo, who lived quite near, should at that very time be on his way in the direction of San Silvestro; he was proceeding along the Via Esquilina, towards the Thermæ, philosophising as he went with his disciple Urbino. And as our envoy had met him and brought him along, he it was who stood upon the threshold. The Marchesa rose and long remained in conversation with him, standing and apart from the others, before she invited him to take a seat between Lattanzio and herself."

Francis of Holland sat by his side. But Michael Angelo paid not the slightest attention to him. Whereupon the Spaniard was acutely nettled and said, with a vexed air:

"Verily the surest means of not being seen by any one is to place oneself right in front of his eyes!"

Michael Angelo, astonished, looked at him and immediately apologised, with great courtesy.

"Pardon me, Messer Francesco," he said. "In truth I did not notice you, for all my attention was centred on the Marchesa.

"Meanwhile Vittoria, after a slight pause, began, with an art which is deserving of the highest praise, to speak, adroitly and discreetly, of a thousand things, but without touching on the subject of painting. It was like one who lays siege, with difficulty and with art, to a fortified town. And Michael Angelo had the air of a besieged person who, vigilant and defiant, puts guards here,

raises bridges there, places mines elsewhere, and keeps the garrison on the alert at the gates and on the walls. But finally the Marchesa carried the day. And truly no one could defend himself against her.

"Well," said she, "we must indeed recognise that we are always conquered when we attack Michael Angelo with his own arms, that is to say with cunning. We must speak to him, Messer Lattanzio, on the subject of law-suits, papal briefs, or else . . . painting if we would reduce him to silence and have the last word."

This ingenious *détour* led the conversation on to the subject of art. Vittoria informed Michael Angelo of a religious construction which she proposed to raise, and immediately Michael Angelo offered to examine the site and draw up a plan.

"I should never have dared to ask so great a service," replied the Marchesa, "although I know that in everything you follow the teachings of the Lord, who lowers the haughty and raises up the humble. . . . Consequently, those who know you esteem the person of Michael Angelo much more than his works, whilst those who do not know you personally glorify the weakest part of yourself—that is to say, the work of your hands. But I praise you no less for so often withdrawing aside, fleeing from our useless conversations, and, instead of painting all the princes who come to beg you to do their portraits, for devoting almost the whole of your life to a single great work."

Michael Angelo modestly declined these compliments, and expressed his aversion for chatterers and idlers—whether great lords or popes—who thought it permissible to impose their society on an artist, when even now his

life was not long enough to enable him to accomplish his task.

The conversation then passed to the highest artistic subjects, which the Marchesa treated with religious gravity. In her opinion, as in that of Michael Angelo, a work of art was an act of faith.

"Good painting," said Michael Angelo, "approaches God and is united with Him. . . . It is but a copy of His perfection, a shadow of His brush, His music, His melody. . . . Consequently, it is not sufficient for a painter to be merely a great and skilful master. I think that his life must also be pure and holy, as much as possible, in order that the Holy Spirit may govern his thoughts."[1]

And thus the day wore on, with these truly sacred and majestically serene conversations in the Church of San Silvestro, unless the friends preferred to continue them in the garden—which Francis of Holland describes for us: "near the fountain, within the shade of laurel bushes, seated on a stone bench placed against an ivy-covered wall," whence they looked down on Rome stretched at their feet.[2]

Unfortunately these beautiful conversations did not last. They were suddenly interrupted by the religious crisis through which the Marchesa di Pescara was passing. In 1541 she left Rome to shut herself up in a cloister, first at Orvieto and then at Viterbo.

[1] First part of the "Dialogue on Painting in the City of Rome."

[2] The same. Third part. On the day of this conversation, Octave Farnese, nephew of Paul III., married Margaret, the widow of Alessandro de' Medici. On this occasion a triumphal procession, with twelve cars after the fashion of ancient times, filed by on the Piazza Navone, where a large crowd had collected. Michael Angelo took refuge with his friends, amidst the quietness of San Silvestro, above the town.

"But she often set off from Viterbo and came to Rome, specially to see Michael Angelo. He was enamoured of her divine spirit, and she amply returned his admiration. He received from her and kept many letters, full of a chaste and very gentle love, and such as that noble soul could write."[1]

"At her request," adds Condivi, "he executed a nude Christ, who, detached from the Cross, would have fallen like a dead body at the feet of his Holy Mother had not two angels supported Him by the arms. Mary is seated under the Cross; her face is marked by tears and suffering; and with open arms she raises her hands heavenwards. On the wood of the Cross we read the words: 'Non vi si pensa quanto sangue costa.'[2] For love of Vittoria, Michael Angelo also drew a Christ on the Cross, but not dead, as He is usually represented, but living, with His face turned towards His Father, and crying: 'Eli! Eli!' The body does not willingly abandon itself; it twists and contracts in the last sufferings of death."

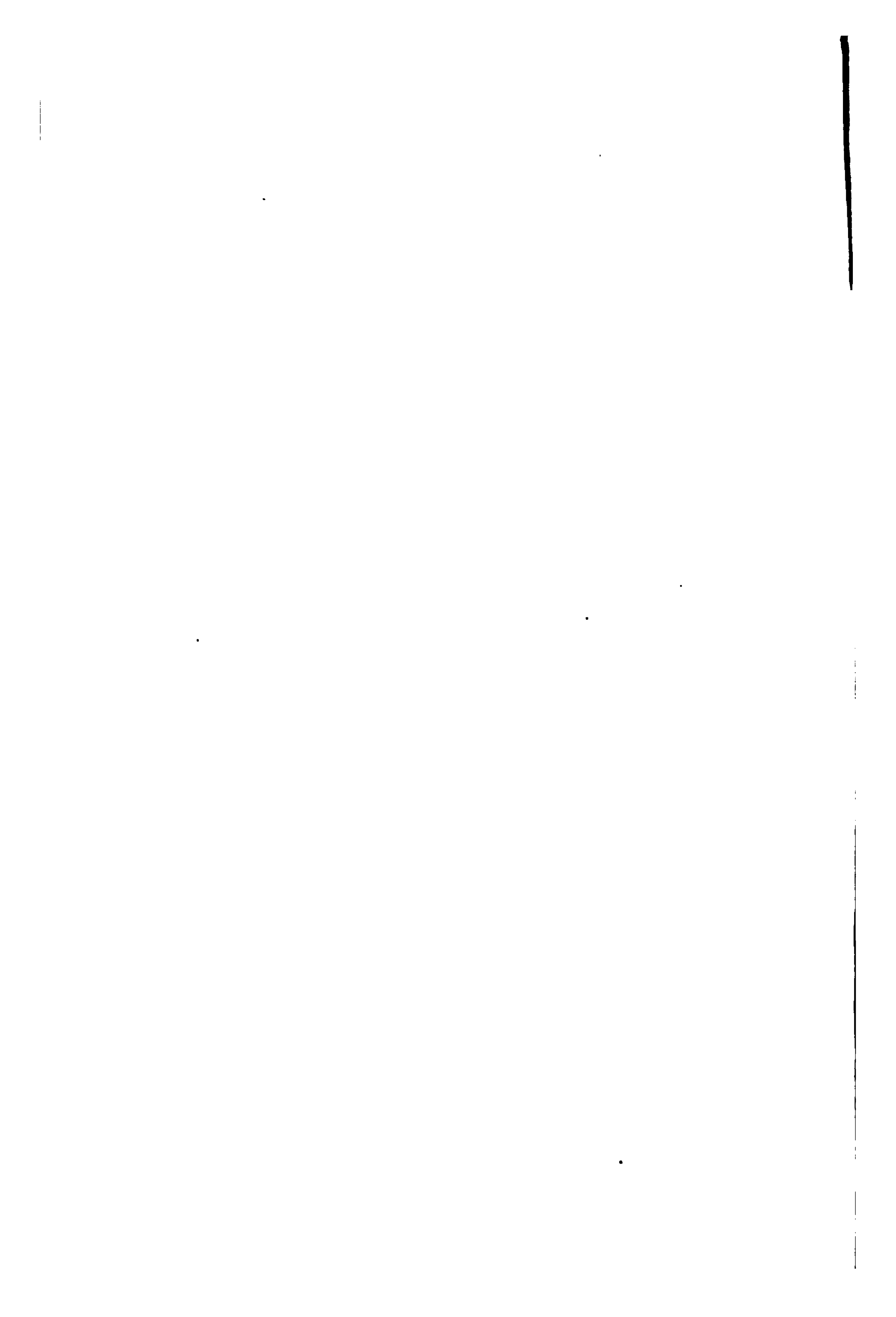
[1] Condivi. These are not, truth to tell, the letters of Vittoria which have been preserved, and which are doubtless noble but a little cold. We must remember that of the whole of this correspondence we possess but five letters written from Orvieto and Viterbo, and only three from Rome, between 1539 and 1541.

[2] This drawing, as M. A. Grenier has shown, inspired the various "Pietà" which Michael Angelo carved later: that of Florence (1550–1555), the Rondanini "Pietà" (1563), and the more recently discovered one of Palestrina (between 1555 and 1560). Connected also with this conception are some drawings in the library at Oxford and the "Entombment" of the National Gallery.

See A. Grenier's "Une Pietà inconnue de Michel-Ange à Palestrina," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, March 1907. Reproductions of the various "Pietà" will be found in this article.

THE RESURRECTION

From a drawing in the Louvre



Perhaps Vittoria also inspired the two sublime drawings of the "Resurrection" which are in the Louvre and the British Museum. In that of the Louvre a herculean Christ has furiously thrown back the heavy stone of His tomb. One of His legs is still in the grave, and with raised head and arms he is springing—in an outburst of passion which recalls one of the "Captives" of the Louvre—towards heaven. To return to God! To leave the world, these men, at whom He does not even look, and who crawl at His feet, stupid and terrified! At last, at last to tear oneself away from this life's vexations! . . . The drawing in the British Museum possesses greater serenity. Christ has issued from the tomb, and His vigorous body floats in the air, which seems to caress it. With arms crossed, head thrown back and eyes closed in ecstasy, He rises in the light like a ray of the sun.

Thus did Vittoria reopen the world of faith to the art of Michael Angelo. She did still more—she gave free scope to that poetic genius which his love for Cavalieri had awakened.[1] Not only did she enlighten him as

[1] It was then that Michael Angelo thought of publishing a collection of his poems. His friends Luigi del Riccio and Donato Giannotti gave him the idea. Up to then he had not attached much importance to what he wrote. Giannotti occupied himself over this publication in 1545. Michael Angelo made a selection of his poems and his friends recopied them. But the death of Riccio in 1546 and that of Vittoria in 1547 diverted him from the idea, which now appeared to him to be a final piece of vanity. His poems were not published during his lifetime, with the exception of a small number, which appeared in the works of Varchi, Giannotti, Vasari, and others. But they passed from hand to hand. The greatest composers—Archadelt, Tromboncino, Consilium, and Costanzo Festa—set them to music. Varchi read and commented upon one of the sonnets in 1546 before the Academy of Florence. He found in it "antique purity and the fulness of the thoughts of Dante."

Michael Angelo was nourished on Dante. "No one understood

regards religous revelations, of which he had a dim presentiment, but, as Thode has shown, she set him the example of singing them in her verses. It was during the early days of their friendship that the first "Spiritual Sonnets" of Vittoria appeared.[1] She sent them to her friend as soon as she had written them.[2]

He found a consolatory charm, a new life in them. A beautiful sonnet which he addressed to her in reply bears witness to his tender gratitude:

"Blessed spirit who, by your ardent love, keeps my old heart, so near the point of death, alive, and who, in the midst of your possessions and your pleasures, distinguish me alone among so many nobler beings—so you appeared formerly to my eyes, so now, in order to console me, you show yourself to my soul. . . . That is the reason why, receiving this favour from you, who think of me in my troubles, I write to thank you. For it would be a piece of great presumption and a great shame if I offered

him better," said Giannotti, "or possessed his work more perfectly." No one has addressed to him a more magnificent homage than the fine sonnet beginning with the words: "Dal ciel discese. . . ." ("Poems," cix, 37). He was equally well acquainted with Petrarca, Cavalcanti, Cino da Pistoja, and the classics of Italian poetry. His style was modelled upon them. But the sentiment which vivified everything was his ardent platonic idealism.

[1] "Rime con giunta di xvi Sonetti spirituali," 1539.

"Rime con giunta di xxiv Sonetti spirituali e Trionfo della Croce," 1544. Venice.

[2] "I possess a little parchment book which she gave me some ten years ago," wrote Michael Angelo to Fattucci on March 7 1551. "It contains one hundred and three sonnets, without counting the forty on paper, which she sent me from Viterbo, and which I have had bound in the same little book. . . . I have also many letters which she wrote me from Orvieto and Viterbo. That is what I possess of her."

to give you wretched paintings in exchange for your beautiful and living creations." [1]

In the summer of 1544 Vittoria returned to live in Rome, in the cloisters of Santa Anna, and she remained there until her death. Michael Angelo used to go to see her. She thought affectionately of him, tried to put a little pleasure and comfort into his life, and, secretly, to make him a few little presents. But the suspicious old man, "who would accept presents from no one," [2] even from those whom he loved the most, refused to give her this pleasure.

She died. He saw her die, and he uttered these touching words, which show with what a chaste reserve their great love had been surrounded:

"Nothing distresses me more than to think that I have seen her dead, and that I have not kissed her forehead and her face as I have kissed her hand." [3]

"This death," says Condivi, "made him for a long time quite stupid: he seemed to have lost his intelligence."

"She wished me the greatest good," said Michael Angelo sadly, later on, "and I the same (Mi noleva grandissimo bene, e io non meno di lei). Death has robbed me of a great friend."

He wrote two sonnets on this death. One, imbued

[1] *See* Appendix, xvii ("Poems," lxxxviii).

[2] Vasari. He quarrelled for a time with one of his dearest friends, Luigi del Riccio, because, against his wishes, he made him presents. "I am more oppressed by your extreme kindness," wrote Michael Angelo, "than if you robbed me. There must be equality between friends. If one gives more and the other less, then they come to blows; and if one is conquered, the other pardons not."

[3] Condivi.

with the Platonic spirit, is characterised by a rugged affectation and a deluded idealism: it is comparable to night with lightning flashing across the sky. Michael Angelo compares Vittoria to the hammer of the divine sculptor, who makes his sublime thoughts spring forth from matter.

"If my rude hammer fashions hard rocks first into one image and then into another, it is from the hand which holds and guides it that it receives movement; it acts through the influence of a foreign force. But the divine hammer which is raised in the heavens creates its own beauty and the beauty of others by reason of its own strength. No other hammer can create without this hammer; this one alone gives life to all the others. And since the blow which it strikes on the anvil is so much the greater the higher it is raised in the forge, this hammer has risen above me to heaven. That is why it will guide my work to a good end, if the divine forge lends its aid. Up to now, on earth, it was alone." [1]

The other sonnet is more tender and proclaims the victory of love over death.

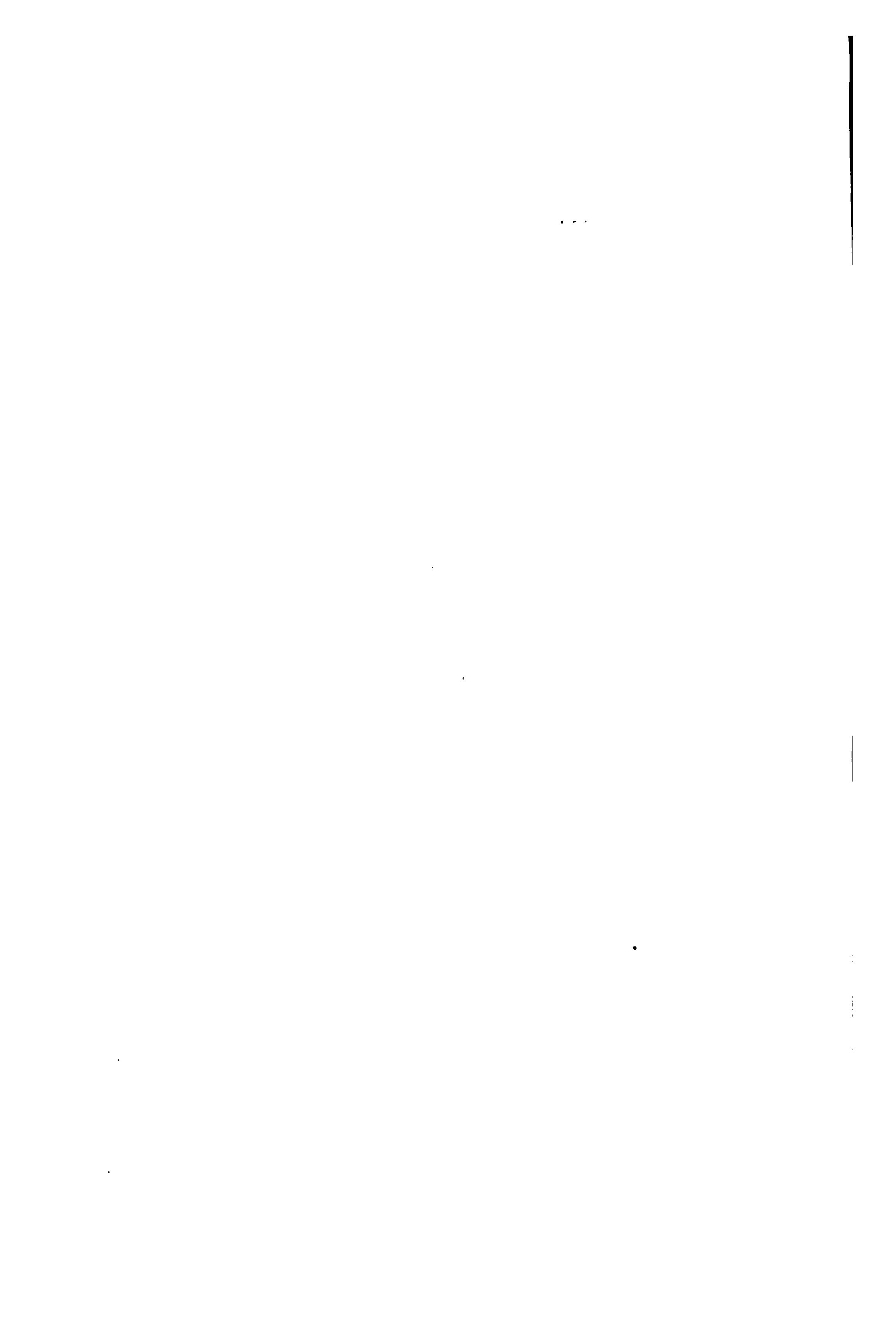
"When she who drew from my breast so many sighs slipped away from the world, from my eyes and from herself, Nature which had judged us worthy of her

[1] *See* Appendix, xviii ("Poems," ci).

Michael Angelo added the following commentary:

"It (the hammer—that is Vittoria) was alone in this world to exalt virtue by its great virtues; there was no one here who worked the bellows of the forge. Now, in heaven, it will have many assistants; for there is no one there to whom virtue is not dear. Consequently, I hope that the completion of my being will come from on high. Now, in heaven, there will be some one to work the bellows; here below there was no assistant at the forge, where virtues are forged."

THE RESURRECTION
From a drawing in the British Museum



became covered with shame, and all who saw her fell into tears. But let not Death to-day boast of having extinguished this sun of suns, as it has done to others! For Love has conquered, and has made her live again on earth and in the heavens, among the saints. Iniquitous and criminal Death thought to stifle the echo of her virtues and tarnish the beauty of her soul. Her writings have done the contrary; they illuminate her with more life than she possessed in her lifetime; and through death she has conquered Heaven, which she had not yet."[1]

It was during this grave and serene friendship[2] that

[1] *See* Appendix, xix ("Poems," c.).

On the back of the manuscript of this sonnet is the pen-and-ink drawing of a woman with wasted breasts which is alleged to be a portrait of Vittoria.

[2] Michael Angelo's friendship for Vittoria Colonna did not exclude other passions. That friendship was not sufficient to satisfy his soul. Great care has been taken not to say so, through a ridiculous desire to "idealise" the artist. As though a Michael Angelo had need of being "idealised"! During the period of his friendship with Vittoria, between 1535 and 1546, Michael Angelo loved a "beautiful and cruel" woman—"donna aspra e bella" (cix, 89), "lucente e fera stella, iniqua e fella, dolce pieta con dispietato core" (cix, 9), "cruda e fera stella" (cix, 14), "bellezza e gratia equalmente infinita" (cix, 3); "my lady enemy," as he also calls her, "la donna mia nemica" (cix, 54). He loved her passionately, humiliated himself in her presence, and would almost have sacrificed his eternal salvation for her sake: "Godo gl' inganni d'una donna bella . . ." (cix, 90); "porgo umilmente al' aspro giogo il collo . . ." (cix, 54); "dolce mi saria l'inferno teco . . ." (cix, 55). He was tortured by this love. She amused herself with him:

> "Questa mie donna è si pronta e ardita,
> C'allor che la m'ancide, ogni mie bene
> Cogli ochi mi promecte e parte tiene
> Il crudel ferro dentro a la ferita . . ."
>
> (cix, 15).

She excited his jealousy, and coquetted with others. He ended

Michael Angelo executed his last great works in painting and sculpture: "The Last Judgment," the frescoes of the Pauline Chapel and—at last—the mausoleum of Julius II. When Michael Angelo left Florence in 1534 to settle down in Rome he thought that, having been relieved of all his other works by the death of Clement VII., he would be able to complete the mausoleum of Julius II. in peace, and then die, with his conscience relieved of the burden which had weighed on the whole of his life. But he had hardly arrived than he allowed himself to be enchained by new masters.

"Paul III. soon summoned him and required his services. . . . Michael Angelo, however, declined until the tomb should be finished, alleging his contract with the Duke of Urbino. His refusal angered the Pope, who said, 'I have been longing for this opportunity for thirty years, and shall I not have it now I am Pope? I will tear up the contract, and I am determined that you shall serve me, come what may.'"[1]

Michael Angelo was on the point of fleeing.

"He thought of taking refuge near Genoa, in an abbey of the Bishop of Aleria, who was his friend and who had been that of Julius II. There, in the neighbourhood of Carrara, he would comfortably have finished

by hating her. He implored Fate to make her ugly and enamoured of him, in order that he could no longer love her and make her suffer in her turn:

"Cupid, why do you permit beauty to refuse your supreme courtesy to one who desires and appreciates you, whilst she accords it to stupid beings? Oh! grant that another time she has a loving heart, but so ugly a body that I love her not, and that she loves me!" *See* Appendix, xx ("Poems," cix, 63).

[1] Vasari.

his work. He was also struck with the idea of retiring to Urbino, a peaceful spot, where he hoped that, out of respect for the memory of Julius II., he would be well received. With that object in view he had already sent there one of his men to buy a house." [1]

But, at the moment of coming to a decision, his will-power, as usual, failed him ; he feared the consequences of his acts, and deceived himself with the eternal illusion —inevitably ending in disappointment—that he could get out of the difficulty by some compromise or other. He again allowed himself to be enchained and continued to drag his cannon ball until the end.

On September 1, 1535, Paul III. issued a brief appointing him architect-in-chief, sculptor and painter to the apostolic palace. Since the preceding April Michael Angelo had consented to work on "The Last Judgment." [2] He was entirely occupied with this work from April 1536 to November 1541—that is to say, during the sojourn of Vittoria at Rome. In the course of this enormous task—doubtless in 1539—the old man fell from his scaffolding and seriously injured his leg. "In his pain and anger he refused to be attended by a doctor." [3] He detested doctors and manifested in his letters a comical anxiety on hearing that one of the members of his family had had the imprudence to call one in.

"Fortunately for him, after his fall, Maestro Baccio Rontini, a Florentine, his friend and a clever physician,

[1] Condivi.

[2] The idea of this immense fresco, which covers the wall at the entrance to the Sistine Chapel, above the papal altar, dated back to 1533, during the papacy of Clement VII.

[3] Vasari.

who loved the arts, took compassion on him and went to his house. When no one answered his knock he entered by a secret way, and passing from room to room found Michael Angelo in desperate case. Baccio refused to leave him before he was healed." [1]

As Julius II. had formerly done, Paul III. used to come to see Michael Angelo painting, and gave his opinion. He was accompanied by his master of the ceremonies, Biagio da Cesena. One day the Pope asked this official what he thought of the work. Biagio, who, says Vasari, was a very scrupulous person, declared that it was "a disgrace to have put so many nudes in such a place, and that the painting was better suited to a bathing-place or an inn than a chapel. This angered Michael Angelo, so, after they had gone, he drew a portrait of Biagio from memory, representing him as Minos in Hell among a troop of devils, with a great serpent wound about his legs." Biagio complained to the Pope. But Paul III. laughed at him. "Had Michael Angelo put you in Purgatory," he said to him, "there might have been some remedy, but from Hell, 'Nulla est redemptio.'"

Biagio was not the only one to find Michael Angelo's paintings indecent. Italy was becoming prudish, and the time was not far distant when Veronese was to be summoned before the Inquisition for the impropriety of his "Supper at the House of Simon." [2] Plenty of people could be found to cry out scandal before "The

[1] Vasari.

[2] In July 1573. Veronese did not fail to rely on the example set him by "The Last Judgment."

"'I admit that it is bad; but I repeat what I have said, that it is my duty to follow the examples which my masters have set me.'

"What then have your masters done? Similar things, perhaps?"

CHARON'S BOAT

Fragment of "The Last Judgment" in the Sistine Chapel

Last Judgment." The one who cried the loudest was Aretino. This master of pornographic literature undertook to give lessons in decency to the chaste Michael Angelo![1] He wrote him an impudent Tartuffe-like letter,[2] accusing him of having represented "things which would have made a house of debauchery blush," and denouncing him to the rising Inquisition for ungodliness, "for unbelief," he said, "would be a less crime than this of attacking the faith of others." He advised the Pope to destroy the fresco. In addition to his denunciation of Lutheranism, he made ignoble insinuations regarding Michael Angelo's morals,[3] and, in conclusion, he accused him of having robbed Julius II. To this infamous blackmailing letter,[4] in which everything that was most

"'Michael Angelo at Rome, in the Pope's Chapel, has represented Our Lord, His Mother, St. John, St. Peter, and the Heavenly Court, and all these personages, even the Virgin Mary, are nude and in attitudes which have not been inspired by the severest religious feeling. . .'"—(A. Baschet's "Paul Véronèse devant le Saint Office," 1880.)

[1] It was done out of revenge. He had endeavoured, in his customary manner, to extort some works of art from him. Moreover, he had had the effrontery to outline a programme for "The Last Judgment." Michael Angelo had politely declined this offer of collaboration and had turned a deaf ear to the demand for presents. Aretino wished to show Michael Angelo what lack of respect towards him might cost.

[2] One of Aretino's comedies, "L'Hipocrito," was the prototype of "Tartuffe" (P. Gauthiez's "L'Arétin, 1895).

[3] He made an insulting allusion to "Gherardi and Tomai" (Gherardo Perini and Tommaso dei Cavalieri).

[4] This attempt at blackmail was impudently displayed. At the end of his threatening letter, after reminding Michael Angelo of what he expected from him—namely, presents—Aretino added the following postscript: "Now that I have somewhat expended my anger, and made you see that if you are "divino" I am not 'acqua,' tear up this letter, like me, and come to a decision . . ."

sacred in the soul of Michael Angelo—his piety, his friendship, and his sense of honour—was defiled and outraged, to this letter, which Michael Angelo could not read without laughing with disdain and weeping with shame, he replied not a word. Doubtless he thought of it what he used to say, with crushing disdain, of certain enemies, "that they were not worth the trouble of combatting, for victory over them was without the slightest importance." And when the ideas of Aretino and Biagio on his "Last Judgment" had gained ground, he made no attempt to reply, did nothing to stop them. He said nothing when his work was described as "Lutheran filth."[1] He said nothing when Paul IV. wished to destroy the fresco.[2] He said nothing when, on an order from the Pope, Daniello da Volterra "breeched" his heroes.[3] Some one asked him his opinion. He replied, without anger, but in a tone of mingled irony and pity: "Tell the Pope that this is but a little thing, which it is very easy to put in order. Let His Holiness devote his entire attention to putting the world in order: to arrange a painting does not cost much labour." He knew with what ardent faith he had accomplished this work, in the midst of religious conversations with Vittoria Colonna, and under the protection of that immaculate soul. He would have blushed to defend the chaste nudity of his heroic thoughts against the unclean suspicions and *sous-entendus* of hypocrites.

[1] By a Florentine in 1549 (Gaye, "Carteggio," ii, 500).

[2] In 1596 Clement VIII. also even thought of effacing "The Last Judgment."

[3] In 1559. Daniello da Volterra was afterwards called "the breeches-maker" ("Il braghettone"). Daniello was a friend of Michael Angelo. Another of his friends, the sculptor Ammanati, condemned these nudes as a scandal. Michael Angelo was not even supported on this occasion by his disciples.

When the Sistine fresco was completed,[1] Michael Angelo thought that at last he had the right to finish the monument of Julius II. But the insatiable Pope demanded that the old man of seventy should paint the frescoes of the Pauline Chapel.[2] He almost put his hand on some of the statues intended for the tomb of Julius II. in order to use them for the ornamentation of his own chapel! Michael Angelo had to consider himself fortunate in being allowed to sign a fifth and last contract with the heirs of Julius II.—a contract by which he agreed to deliver his completed statues[3] and pay two sculptors to finish the monument, after which he was released from any other obligation for ever.

But he was not at the end of his troubles. The heirs of Julius II. continued greedily to claim the money which they alleged had formerly been laid out for him. The Pope told him not to think about it, but to concentrate all his attention on the Pauline Chapel.

"But," replied Michael Angelo, "we paint with our head, not with our hands. He whose mind is not at ease dishonours himself. That is why, so long as I have

[1] The inauguration of "The Last Judgment" took place on December 25, 1541. People came from all over Italy, France, Germany, and Flanders to be present. For a description of the work, see my book on Michael Angelo in the series "Les Maîtres de l'Art," pp. 90–93.

[2] These frescoes ("The Conversion of St. Paul" and the "Martyrdom of St. Peter"), at which Michael Angelo worked from 1542, were interrupted, in 1544 and 1546, by two illnesses, and were painfully terminated in 1549–1550. They were "his last paintings," says Vasari, "and they cost him great labour, as painting, especially fresco, is not the work of an old man."

[3] These must have been his "Moses" and the two "Slaves"; but Michael Angelo decided that the latter were no longer suitable for a tomb thus reduced in size, so he carved two other figures "Active" and "Contemplative Life" (Rachael and Leah).

these worries, I do nothing good. . . . I have been chained to this tomb the whole of my life. I have wasted all my youth in endeavouring to justify myself before Leo X. and Clement VII. I have been ruined by my too great conscientiousness. Thus did my fate ordain it! I see many men who have got together incomes of two to three thousand crowns, whilst I, after terrible efforts, have only succeeded in remaining poor. And they call me a thief! . . . Before men (I do not say before God) I consider myself an honest man. I have never deceived any one. . . . I am not a thief: I am a Florentine citizen, of noble birth, and the son of an honourable man. . . . When I have to defend myself against scoundrels I become, in the end, insane! . . ."[1]

In order to indemnify his adversaries he completed the statues representing "Active Life" and "Contemplative Life" with his own hand, although he was not forced to do so by his contract.

So, at last, in January 1545 the monument to Julius II. was inaugurated at San Pietro in Vincoli. What remained of the fine primitive plan? Only the statue of Moses, which became the centre of it, after having formerly been but one of its details. It was the caricature of a great project.

However, it was finished. Michael Angelo was delivered from the nightmare which had troubled the whole of his life.

[1] Letter to an unknown "Monsignore" (October 1542). ("Letters," Milanesi's edition, cdxxxv).

MOSES (TOMB OF JULIUS II)

San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome

II

FAITH

> Signior mie caro, i' te sol chiamo e 'nvoco
> Contra l'inutil mie cieco tormento.[1]

His desire, after the death of Vittoria, would have been to return to Florence, "to lay his weary bones at rest by the side of his father."[2] But after having served the Popes all his life he wished to devote his last years to the service of God. Perhaps he had been urged towards this by his friend and was carrying out one of her last wishes. On January 1, 1547, one month before the death of Vittoria Colonna, Michael Angelo had, in fact, been appointed, by a brief of Paul III., prefect and architect of St. Peter's, with full powers to erect the building. It was not without difficulty that he could be got to accept the post; and it was not the earnest entreaties of the Pope which made him decide to take upon his septuagenarian shoulders the heaviest load which he had yet borne. He saw in it a duty—a mission from God.

"Many think—and I myself think—that I have been placed in this post by God," he wrote. "Old though I

[1] "Poems," cxxiii.
[2] Letter from Michael Angelo to Vasari (September 19, 1552).

am, I do not wish to abandon it, for I serve through love of God and place all my hopes in Him." [1]

He did not accept any payment for this sacred task.

He found himself engaged in a struggle with numerous enemies: "the faction of San Gallo," [2] as Vasari calls them, and with all the administrators, tradesmen and contractors of the building, whose frauds—to which San Gallo had always closed his eyes—he denounced. "Michael Angelo," says Vasari," delivered St. Peter from thieves and robbers."

A coalition was formed against him, headed by the impudent Nanni di Baccio Bigio, an architect whom Vasari accuses of having robbed Michael Angelo, and who aspired to supplant him. They spread about the rumour that Michael Angelo knew nothing of architecture; that he was wasting money and merely destroying the work of his predecessor. The committee in charge of the administration of the building, itself taking part against its architect, instituted, in 1551, a solemn inquiry, presided over by the Pope. Inspectors and workmen, supported by Cardinals Salviati and Cervini,[3] came and gave evidence against Michael Angelo. But the artist hardly

[1] Letter from Michael Angelo to his nephew Leonardo (July 7, 1557).

[2] The person here in question is Antonio da San Gallo, Architect in Chief of St. Peter's from 1537 to the time of his death in October 1546. He had always been the enemy of Michael Angelo, who treated him without consideration. They were opposed to each other over the Borgo fortifications (the Vatican quarter), the plans for which by San Gallo were set aside through Michael Angelo in 1545, and also during the building of the Farnese Palace, which San Gallo had built up to the second floor, but which Michael Angelo completed, after imposing his model for the cornice in 1549 and eliminating his rival's project (*see* Thode's "Michael Angelo").

[3] The future Pope Marcel II.

deigned to justify himself—he refused all discussion. "I am not obliged," he said to Cardinal Cervini, "to communicate either to you or to any one that which I ought or wish to do. Your business is to look after the expenses. The remainder is my affair."[1] Never would his intractable pride allow him to communicate his plans to any one. To his workmen who complained he replied: "Your business is to build, to hew, to do joiner's work, and to carry out my orders. As to knowing what is in my mind, that you will never learn, for it would be against my dignity to tell you."[2]

Against this hatred, aroused by such proceedings, he could not have resisted for a moment without the favour of the Popes.[3] Consequently, when Julius III. died[4] and Cardinal Cervini became Pope, Michael Angelo was on the point of leaving Rome. But Marcellus remained only a few days on the throne and was succeeded by Paul IV. Again assured of the papal protection, Michael Angelo continued to struggle. He would have considered himself dishonoured and would have feared for his salvation had he abandoned his work.

[1] Vasari.

[2] Bottari.

[3] At the end of the inquiry of 1551, Michael Angelo, turning towards Julius III. who was presiding, said: "Holy Father, you see what profit I have; for if these labours do not benefit my soul, I am losing my time and trouble." The Pope, who loved him, laid his hands on his shoulders, and said: "Do not doubt that you will gain both in soul and body. Be without fear!" (Vasari).

[4] Paul III. died on November 10, 1549, and Julius III., who, like him, was fond of Michael Angelo, reigned from February 8, 1550, to March 23, 1555. Cardinal Cervini was elected Pope on April 9, 1555, under the name of Marcellus II. But he reigned only a few days and was succeeded, on May 23, 1555, by Caraffa, Paul IV.

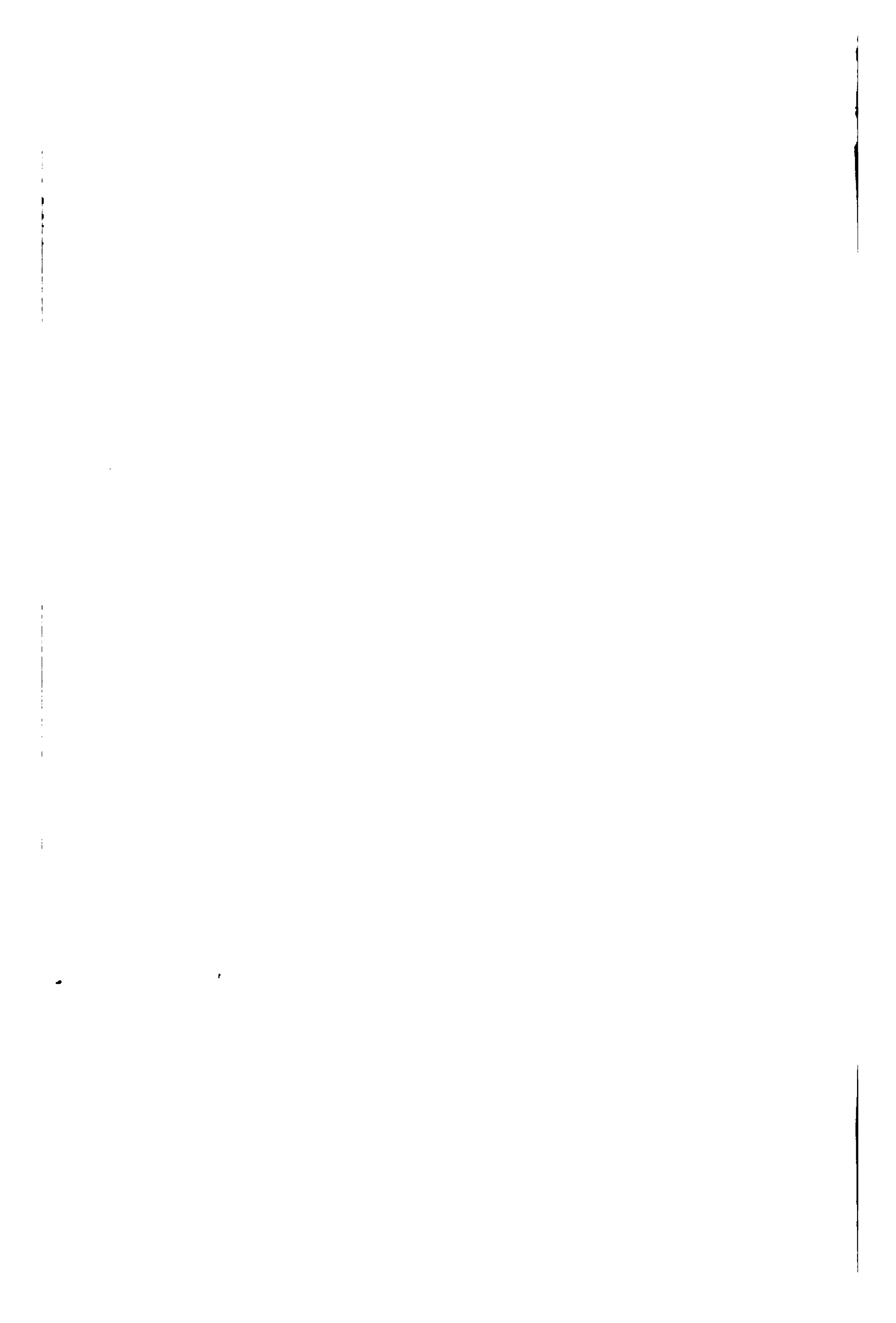
"It was placed in my hands against my wishes," he said. "For eight years, in the midst of all sorts of worries and troubles, have I been exhausting myself in vain. Now that the building is sufficiently advanced to enable them to cover the cupola with a vault, my departure from Rome would be the ruin of the work, a great affront to myself, and a very great sin on my soul."[1]

His enemies refused to lay down their arms, and at one time the struggle assumed a tragic character. In 1563 Michael Angelo's most devoted assistant, Pier Luigi Gaeta, was thrown into prison on a false charge of theft; and the clerk of the works, Cesare da Casteldurante, was stabbed. Michael Angelo replied by appointing Gaeta in Cesare's place. The committee dismissed Gaeta and appointed Michael Angelo's enemy, Nanni di Baccio Bigio. The artist, beside himself with anger, came no longer to St. Peter's. They spread the rumour that he had resigned, and the committee appointed as his substitute Nanni, who immediately began to assume the *rôle* of master. He counted on tiring out the old man of eighty-eight—sick and dying as he was. But he did not know his adversary. Michael Angelo at once went to the Pope and threatened to leave Rome unless justice were shown him. Insisting on a fresh inquiry, he convicted Nanni

[1] Letter from Michael Angelo to Leonardo (May 11, 1555). However, affected by the criticisms of his own friends, he demanded in 1560 "to be relieved of the burden which, by order of the Pope, he had been bearing gratuitously for seventeen years." But his resignation was not accepted, and Pius IV., by a brief, renewed his appointment. It was then that, on the earnest entreaty of Cavalieri, he at last determined to execute the wooden model of the cupola. Up to then he had retained all his plans in his head, and refused to communicate them to any one.

ORIGINAL MODEL (IN WOOD) OF THE DOME OF ST. PETER'S

In the Vatican



of incapacity and lying, and had him dismissed.[1] This was in September 1563, four months before his death. Thus, up to the end of his days, he had to struggle against jealousy and hatred.

Do not let us pity him. He well knew how to defend himself. Even when dying he was able, single-handed, as he formerly said to his brother Giovan Simone, " to tear in pieces ten thousand such men."

Apart from his great work at St. Peter's, other architectural projects occupied him during the closing years of his life—the Capitol,[2] the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli,[3] the staircase of the " Laurenziana " of Florence,[4] the Porta Pia, and especially the Church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini—the last of his great plans, and which, like the others, came to nothing.

The Florentines had begged him to build them a national church in Rome: Duke Cosimo himself had written him a flattering letter on the subject; and Michael Angelo, supported by his love for Florence, undertook the work with juvenile enthusiasm.[5] He told his compatriots " that if they carried out his plan they would have a building such as neither the Romans nor the Greeks had ever equalled; words," says Vasari, " such as never left his mouth either before or afterwards,

[1] All the same, Nanni, on the day after Michael Angelo's death, begged Duke Cosimo to give him Michael Angelo's post at St. Peter's.

[2] Michael Angelo lived to see the construction of only the staircases and the square. The buildings of the Capitol were not completed until the seventeenth century.

[3] Nothing now remains of Michael Angelo's Church. It was entirely rebuilt in the eighteenth century.

[4] Michael Angelo's model was executed in stone, and not in wood, as he had wished.

[5] In 1559–1560.

for he was extremely modest." The Florentines accepted the plan without changing it in anything. One of Michael Angelo's friends, Tiberio Calcagni, made, under his superintendence, a wooden model of the church, "which was so rare a work of art that, for beauty, richness and variety such a building had never been seen before. Building was commenced and 5000 crowns were expended. Then money was lacking, work was stopped, and Michael Angelo experienced the most violent sorrow."[1] This church was never built and even the model disappeared.

Such was Michael Angelo's last artistic disappointment. How could he have had the illusion, when dying, that St. Peter's, hardly commenced, would ever be completed, that any of his works would survive him? Perhaps he himself, had he been free, would have shattered them. The story of his last piece of sculpture, "Christ taken down from the Cross," in the Cathedral in Florence, shows to what a state of detachment from art he had attained. If he still continued his work as a sculptor, he was no longer prompted by faith in art, but by faith in Christ, and because "his mind and his strength could not resist the temptation to create."[2] But when he had completed his work he broke it.[3] "He would have destroyed it altogether had not his servant, Antonio, begged him to give it to him."[4]

[1] Vasari.

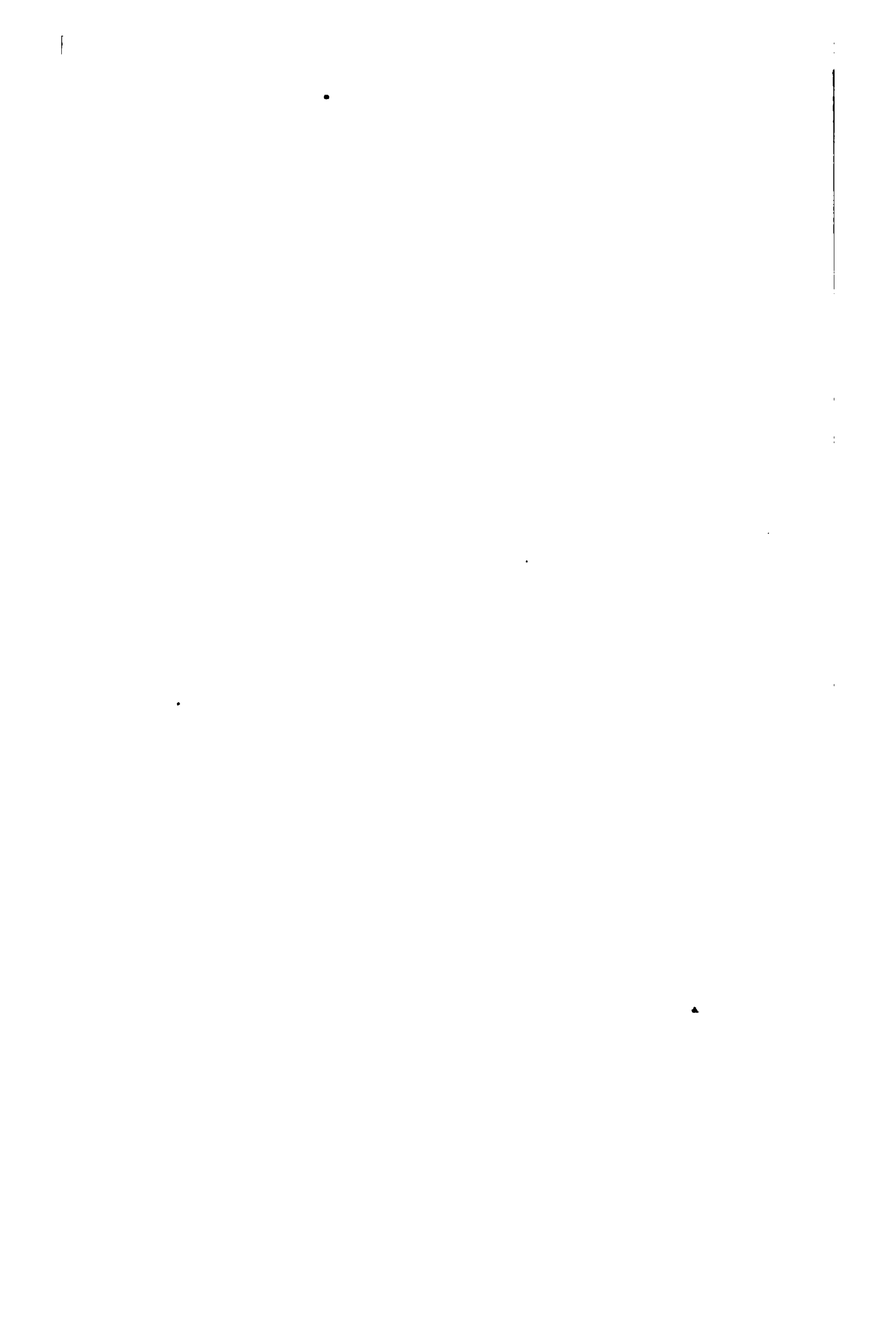
[2] Vasari. It was in 1553 that he began this work, the most touching of all his works, for it is the most intimate. We feel on looking at it that the artist speaks only for himself; he suffers and abandons himself to his suffering. Moreover, he has, it appears, represented himself in the old man with sorrowful face who supports the body of Christ.

[3] In 1555.

[4] Tiberio Calcagni bought it from Antonio, and asked Michael

THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS [Unfinished]

From the group in the Cathedral, Florence



Such was the indifference with which Michael Angelo, when near the end of his days, regarded his works.

Since the death of Vittoria no great affection brightened up his life. Love had fled.

> Fiamma d'amor nel cor non m' è rimasa ;
> Se 'l maggior caccia sempre il minor duolo,
> Di penne l' alm' ho ben tarpat' et rasa.[1]

He had lost his brothers and his best friends. Luigi del Riccio had died in 1546, Sebastiano del Piombo in 1547, his brother Giovan Simone in 1548. He had never been in very close relations with his youngest brother, Sigismondo, who died in 1555. His familiar and crabbed affection he had centred on his orphan niece and nephew, the children of Buonarroto, the brother whom he loved the most. The girl's name was Cecca (Francesca), the boy's Leonardo. Michael Angelo placed Cecca in a convent, gave her a trousseau, paid for her board and lodging, and, when she married,[2] gave her one of his possessions as a dowry.[3] He personally looked after the education of Leonardo, who was nine years of age at the death of his father. A long correspondence, which often recalls that

Angelo's permission to repair it. Michael Angelo consented, and Calcagni put the group together again. But he died and the work remained unfinished.

[1] "The flame of love remains not in my heart. The worst evil (old age) always drives away the lesser. I have clipped the wings of the soul" ("Poems," lxxxi, about 1550). However, a few poems, which appear to date from his extreme old age, show that the flame had not died down so low as he thought, and that "old burnt wood," as he expressed it, sometimes caught fire again. (*See* Appendix, xxi. "Poems," cx. and cxix.)

[2] She married Michele di Niccolo Guicciardini in 1538.

[3] A property at Pozzolatico.

between Beethoven and his nephew, bears witness to the seriousness with which he fulfilled his paternal mission.[1] It was interspersed with frequent fits of anger. Leonardo often sorely tried his uncle's patience; and his patience was far from great. The boy's bad handwriting was sufficient to exasperate Michael Angelo, who considered this to be a lack of respect towards him.

"I never receive a letter from you without being thrown into a fever before I can read it. I am at a loss to know where you learnt how to write! Little love here! . . . I believe that if you had to write to the biggest ass in the world you would take greater care. . . . I threw your last letter into the fire, because I could not read it. I cannot, therefore, reply. I have already told you, and constantly repeated, that every time I get a letter from you fever attacks me before I succeed in reading it. Once for all, write to me no more in the future. If you have anything to say to me, find some one who knows how to write, for I need my head for something else than to exhaust myself in deciphering your incomprehensible nonsense." [2]

Naturally distrustful, and rendered still more suspicious through the vexations which his brothers caused him, he was not greatly deceived as regards his nephew's humble and fawning affection, which seemed to him to be addressed above all to his money-chest, to which the little boy knew he was to succeed. Michael Angelo did not hesitate to tell him so. On one occasion, being ill and in danger of death, he learnt that Leonardo had hastened

[1] This correspondence began in 1540.

[2] ". . . stare a spasimare intorno alle tue lettere" ("Letters," 1536–1548).

to Rome and made some indiscreet inquiries. Furious, he wrote the following lines to him:

"Leonardo! I have been ill, and you rushed to Ser Giovan Francesco's to see if I had left anything. Haven't you enough of my money at Florence? You cannot belie your family and avoid resembling your father, who drove me from my own house in Florence! Know that I have made a will in such a manner that you have nothing to expect from me. Go then with God; let my eyes see you no more, and never write to me again!"[1]

These outbursts of anger had little effect on Leonardo, for they were generally followed by affectionate letters and presents.[2] A year later he again rushed to Rome, attracted by a promise of a gift of 3000 crowns. Michael Angelo, hurt by this interested haste, wrote to him as follows:

"You have come to Rome in furious haste. I do not know whether you would have come so quickly had I been in poverty and in need of bread! . . . You say that it was your duty to come, through love of me! Yes! the love of a wood-worm.[3] Had you loved me, you would have written: 'Michael Angelo, keep the 3000 crowns and spend them on yourself; for you have given so many to us that that is sufficient. Your life is dearer to us than

[1] Letter of July 11, 1544.

[2] Michael Angelo was the first to inform his nephew, during an illness in 1549, that he had mentioned him in his will. The will was as follows: "To Sigismondo and you I leave all I possess; in such a manner that my brother Sigismondo and you, my nephew, have equal rights, and neither can exercise authority over my possessions without the consent of the other."

[3] "L'amore del tarlo!"

money. . . .' But for the past forty years you have lived on me, and never have I received from you even a good word. . . ." [1]

A serious question was that of Leonardo's marriage. It occupied the uncle and the nephew for six years.[2] The docile Leonardo treated the uncle with money to leave with the utmost deference. He accepted all his observations and left him to choose, discuss and reject the ladies who offered themselves: he seemed to be indifferent. Michael Angelo, on the contrary, took a passionate interest in the matter, every bit as much as though it was he who was going to marry. He regarded the marriage as a serious affair, in which love was the least important point. Nor did money weigh much more in the balance. That which counted was health and honourability. He gave his nephew some very austere advice, devoid of poetry—robust and positive counsels.

"It is a grave decision. Recollect that between man and woman there should always be a difference in age of ten years; and make sure that she whom you choose is not only good but healthy. . . . Several persons have been mentioned to me. One pleased me, the other not. If you think of it, write to me, in case you like one better than the other. I will give you my opinion. . . . You are free to have one or the other, provided that she is of noble birth and well educated, and rather without a dowry than a large one—in order to live in peace. . . .[3]

[1] February 6, 1546. He adds: "It is true that, last year, I lectured you so much that you were ashamed and sent me a little cask of Trebbiano. Ah! that cost you dear!"

[2] From 1547 to 1553.

[3] And elsewhere: "You are not to look for money, but

A Florentine has told me that you have been spoken to about a daughter of the Ginori family, and that she pleases you. I do not care for you to take as a wife a girl whose father would not give her to you if he had sufficient to settle a suitable dowry upon her. I desire that he who gives you a wife gives her to you and not to your fortune. . . . All you have got to take into consideration is the health of her soul and body, the quality of her blood and morals, and, in addition, who her parents are, for that is of great importance. . . . Take the trouble to find a woman who will not be ashamed of washing the dishes, in case of necessity, and of looking after household matters. . . . As to beauty, since you are not exactly the handsomest young man in Florence, do not trouble yourself about it, provided that she is not a cripple, or repulsive. . . ." [1]

After much searching, it looked as though they had found the *rara avis*. But at the last moment the lady was found to have a redhibitory defect.

"I learn that she is short-sighted, which appears to me to be no small defect. Consequently I have promised nothing yet. Since you also have promised nothing, my advice is: liberate yourself, if you are certain of the thing." [2]

Leonardo grew discouraged. He expressed astonish-

only for goodness and a good name. . . You need a wife who will remain with you, and whom you can command—a woman who does not cause trouble and spends all her time at rejoicings and feasts, for where court is paid it is easy to become debauched ('diventar puttana'), especially when women are without children . . ." ("Letters," February 1, 1549).

1 ". . . 'Storpiata o schifa' . . . ." ("Letters," 1547–1552).

2 "Letters," December 19, 1551.

ment at his uncle's insistence in wishing to get him married.

"It is true that I desire it," replied Michael Angelo. "This marriage is good, in order to prevent our family finishing with us. I know very well that if that happened the world would not receive a shock; but every animal strives to preserve its species. And that is why I want you to marry." [1]

At last Michael Angelo himself got tired; he began to find that it was ridiculous that it was always he who occupied himself over Leonardo's marriage, whilst his nephew appeared to take no interest in it. So he declared that he would have nothing more to do with it.

"For the past sixty years I have occupied myself with your business. I am old now and must think of my own."

At that very moment he heard that his nephew had just become engaged to Cassandra Ridolfi. Michael Angelo rejoiced, congratulated him and promised him a dowry of 1500 ducats. Leonardo married.[2] Michael Angelo sent his good wishes to the newly-married couple and promised Cassandra a pearl necklace. Still, joy did not prevent him warning his nephew that, "although he did not know much about these things, it seemed to him that Leonardo ought to have settled very exactly all money questions before leading the wife to his house, for there was ever the germ of disunion in these questions." He ended his

[1] He adds, however: "But if you do not feel healthy enough, then it is better for you to resign yourself to living without bringing other wretched beings into the world" ("Letters," June 24, 1552).

[2] May 16, 1553.

letter with this jovial recommendation : " And now try to live, remembering well that the number of widows is always greater than that of widowers." [1]

Two months later he sent to Cassandra, instead of the promised necklace, two rings—one set with a diamond, the other with a ruby. To thank him, Cassandra made him a present of eight shirts. Michael Angelo wrote in reply :

" They are beautiful, especially the material, and they please me greatly. But I am sorry that you have gone to this expense, for I had everything I needed. Give my best thanks to Cassandra and tell her that I am at her disposal to send anything in the way of Roman or other articles I may find here. This time I have sent only a little thing ; another time we will do better, with some object which will give her pleasure. Only tell me." [2]

Soon children were born. The first was called Buonarroto,[3] at the request of Michael Angelo ; the second (who died shortly after birth) Michael Angelo.[4] And the old uncle who invited the young couple to visit him in Rome in 1556 never ceased affectionately to take part in the joys as well as in the troubles of the family, but without ever allowing them to occupy themselves either with his affairs or even with his health.

Outside family relations Michael Angelo did not lack illustrious or distinguished friends.[5] Notwithstanding

[1] " Letters," May 20, 1553 [2] The same, August 5, 1553.
[3] Born in 1554. [4] Born in 1555.
[5] We must make a clear distinction between the periods of his life. In Michael Angelo's long career we find times when he lived in solitude, but also others when he had intercourse with friends. Thus, about 1515, he was one of a little circle of Florentines at Rome—all open-minded and good-humoured men

his illtemper, it would be quite wrong to represent him as a peasant of the Danube, after the fashion of Beethoven. He was an Italian aristocrat, highly cultured and of pure race. From the days of his youth, spent in the gardens of San Marco, in the service of Lorenzo the Magnificent, he remained in relations with the noblest of the great lords, princes, prelates,[1] writers[2] and artists[3] of

such as Domenico Buoninsegni, Leonardo Sellajo, Giovanni Spetiale, Bartolommeo Verazzano, Giovanni Gellesi, and Canigiani. A little later, under the pontificate of Clement VII., he belonged to the witty company of Francesco Berni and Fra Sebastiano del Piombo, the devoted but dangerous friend who informed Michael Angelo of all the rumours concerning him which were afloat, and who stirred up his enmity against the Raphael party. Above all, in the days of Vittoria Colonna, there was the circle of Luigi del Riccio, a Florentine merchant who advised him in his affairs and was his most intimate friend. He met at his house Donato Giannotti, the musician Archadelt, and the handsome Cecchino. They had a common love for poetry, music, and choice dishes. It was for Riccio, in despair over the death of Cecchino, that Michael Angelo wrote his forty-eight funereal epigrams; and Riccio, on the receipt of each epigram, sent to Michael Angelo trout, mushrooms, truffles, melons, doves, &c. (*see* Frey's edition of the "Poems," lxxiii). After Riccio's death, in 1546, Michael Angelo had disciples rather than friends, such as Vasari, Condivi, Daniello da Volterra, Bronzino, Leone Leoni, and Benvenuto Cellini. He inspired in them a passionate veneration; whilst he, for his part, regarded them with touching affection.

[1] Through his duties at the Vatican, no less than through the grandeur of his religious spirit, Michael Angelo was particularly in relations with the high dignitaries of the Church.

[2] It may be worthy of note, *en passant*, that Michael Angelo knew Machiavelli. A letter from Biagio Buonaccorsi to Machiavelli, dated September 6, 1508, informs him that he has sent him through Michael Angelo some money belonging to a woman whose name is not given.

[3] It was doubtless among artists that he had fewest friends, except at the end of his life, when he was surrounded by disciples

Italy. He vied in wit with the poet Francesco Berni ;[1] he corresponded with Benedetto Varchi; and he exchanged poems with Luigi del Riccio and Donato Giannotti. People sought to hear his conversation, his profound observations on art, and his remarks on Dante, whom no one knew better than he. A Roman lady[2] wrote that he was, when he liked, "a gentleman of elegant and seductive manners, so much so that there hardly existed his equal in Europe." The dialogues of Giannotti and Francis of Holland show his exquisite politeness and familiarity with society. One can even see from certain letters written to princes[3] that he could easily have become a perfect courtier. The world never

who adored him. He had little sympathy for the majority of the artists of his period, and he did not hide his feelings. He was on very bad terms with Leonardo da Vinci, Perugino, Francia, Signorelli, Raphael, Bramante, San Gallo. "Cursed be the day on which you ever spoke well of any one!" wrote Jacopo Sansovino to him on June 30, 1517. This did not prevent Michael Angelo being of service to Sansovino later (in 1524) and to many others. But his genius was of too passionate a nature to love any other ideal than his own, and he was too sincere to pretend to love that for which he did not care. However, he showed great courtesy to Titian on the occasion of his visit to Rome in 1545. To the society of artists, who were generally lacking in culture, he preferred that of writers and men of action.

[1] They exchanged friendly and burlesque epistles ("Poems," lvii and clxxii). Berni addresses a magnificent eulogy to Michael Angelo in his "Capitolo a fra Sebastiano del Piombo." He says "that he was the Idea itself of sculpture and architecture, just as Astræa was the Idea of justice, wholly beautiful and wholly intelligent." He called him a second Plato, and, addressing other poets, uttered this admirable and often quoted phrase: "Silence, harmonious instruments! You speak words, he alone says things" ("Ei dice cose, e voi dite parole").

[2] Dona Argentina Malaspina, in 1516.

[3] Especially his letter to Francis I., April 26, 1546.

fled from him: he it was who kept it at a distance, and, had he liked, a triumphal life could have been his. To Italy he was the incarnation of its genius. At the end of his career, the last survivor of the great Renaissance, he personified it—he alone was a whole century of glory. Artists were not the only people who regarded him as a supernatural being.[1] Princes bowed before him. Francis I. and Catherine de' Medici rendered him homage.[2] Cosimo de' Medici wished to make him a senator;[3] and when he came to Rome[4] treated him as an equal, made him sit by his side, and conversed with him confidentially. Cosimo's son, Don Francesco de' Medici, received him with berretta in hand, "showing a boundless respect for so rare a man."[5] They honoured "his great virtue"[6] no less than his genius. His old age was surrounded by as much glory as that of Goethe or Hugo. But he was a man of another metal. He had neither the

[1] Condivi begins his "Life of Michael Angelo" as follows: "Since the hour when the Lord God, by His all-powerful Grace, judged me worthy not only of seeing Michael Angelo Buonarroti, the unique painter and sculptor—a privilege which I should hardly have dared to hope for—but of enjoying his conversations, affection, and confidence, I undertook, in recognition of such a favour, to collect together everything in his life which appeared to me to be worthy of praise and admiration, in order that the example of such a man might be useful to others."

[2] Francis I. in 1546; Catherine de' Medici in 1559. She wrote to him from Blois, "knowing, like the whole world, how superior he was to any one else of this century," to beg him to sculpture an equestrian statue of Henry II., or, at least, to make a drawing of it (November 14, 1559).

[3] In 1552, Michael Angelo did not reply, at which the Duke was hurt. When Benvenuto Cellini spoke about it to Michael Angelo he received a sarcastic reply.

[4] In November 1560.

[5] In October 1561.

[6] Vasari (on the subject of the reception which Cosimo gave Michael Angelo).

former's thirst for popularity, nor the latter's middle-class respect—so free though he was—for the world and established order. He despised glory, he despised the world ; and though he served the Popes, "it was under compulsion." Moreover, he did not hide the fact that "even the Popes wearied and sometimes annoyed him by talking to him and sending for him," and, "notwithstanding their order, he neglected to go, when he was not disposed to do so."[1]

"When a man is so formed by nature and education that he hates ceremonies and despises hypocrisy it is senseless not to let him live as he likes. If he asks you for nothing and does not seek your society, why do you seek his? Why do you wish to lower him to these trifles, which are incompatible with his retirement from the world? He who thinks of pleasing imbeciles rather than his genius is not a superior man."[2]

His relations with the world were, therefore, either wholly indispensable ones or those which were purely intellectual. He admitted no one to his fellowship ; and popes, princes, men of letters and artists had little place in his life. Even with the small number of these for whom he felt real sympathy it was rare that he established a durable friendship. He loved his friends and was generous towards them ; but his violence, pride and suspicion often turned those whom he had obliged the most into deadly enemies. One day he wrote this beautiful, sad letter :

"The poor ungrateful man is so fashioned by nature that if, in his distress, you come to his assistance he will

[1] Francis of Holland's "Conversations on Painting."

[2] Francis of Holland, *loc. cit.*

say that it was he himself who advanced you what you gave him. If you give him work, in order to show your interest in him, he will pretend that you were obliged to entrust him with it, because you knew nothing about it. In the case of all the benefits which he receives he will say that the benefactor was obliged to grant them. And if the favours received are so evident that it is impossible to deny them, then the ungrateful fellow waits until he from whom he has received good falls into manifest error; then he has a pretext for saying ill of him and liberating himself from any acknowledgment. Thus have I ever been treated, and yet not an artist has applied to me without my having aided him, and with all my heart. And then they seize upon my odd humour or the madness with which they allege I am affected, and which harms no one but myself, as a pretext for speaking ill of me; and they insult me. This is the fate of all who do good."[1]

In his own house he had fairly devoted but generally mediocre assistants. He was suspected of choosing mediocre workers designedly, in order that they would be but docile instruments and not collaborators, which, besides, would have been legitimate. But, says Condivi, "it was not true, as many reproachfully said, that he would not give instruction. On the contrary, he did so willingly. Unfortunately, Fate ordained that he should place his hands either on men who showed little capacity or on others who were capable but lacking in perseverance—assistants who, after a few weeks of his teaching, considered that they were already masters."

It is certain, moreover, that the first quality which he required his assistants to show was absolute submission.

[1] To Piero Gondi, January 26, 1524.

He was as merciless against those who affected a haughty independence as he was full of indulgence and generosity to modest and faithful disciples. Lazy Urbano, "who would not work"[1]—and who was right, for when he did work it was to spoil, irremediably, through carelessness, the "Christ" of the Minerva—was, during an illness, the object of his paternal care.[2] He said that Michael Angelo was as "dear as the best father." Piero di Giannoto was "loved like a son." Silvio di Giovanni Cepparello, who left him to enter the service of Andrea Doria, was disconsolate and begged to be taken back. The touching story of Antonio Mini is an example of Michael Angelo's generosity towards his assistants. Mini, the one among his disciples who, according to Vasari, "was willing but had no aptitude," loved the daughter of a poor widow of Florence. At the request of his parents, Michael Angelo removed him from Florence. Antonio wished to go to France.[3] Michael Angelo made him a royal gift: "All the drawings, all the cartoons, the painting of 'Leda,'[4] and all the models which he had made for that work,

[1] Vasari describes Michael Angelo's assistants as follows: "Piero Urbano of Pistoia possessed intelligence, but would never take pains, while Antonio Mini, though willing, had not the aptitude, for hard wax does not take a good impression. Ascanio della Ripa Transone worked hard, but never realised anything in works or designs . . ."

[2] Michael Angelo grew anxious over his slightest ailments. He took an interest in a cut which Urbano had made on his finger. He saw that he carried out his religious duties. "Go to confession," he said, "work well, look after the house . . ." ("Letters," March 29, 1518).

[3] There had already been a question of Antonio Mini going to France, but with Michael Angelo, after his flight from Florence in 1529.

[4] The picture painted during the siege for the Duke of Ferrara, but which he refused to give to him because the Duke's ambassador had shown a lack of respect for him.

whether in wax or in clay." Possessed of this fortune, Antonio set out.[1] But the ill-luck which affected the projects of Michael Angelo pursued those of his humbler friend still more relentlessly. Antonio went to Paris, but Francis I. was absent. So he left the "Leda" in the charge of one of his Italian friends; Giuliano Buonaccorsi, and returned to Lyons, where he had settled down. On returning to Paris a few months later he found that the "Leda" had disappeared; Buonaccorsi had sold it, to his own profit, to Francis. Antonio, wild with grief, without resources, incapable of defending himself, and lost in the foreign city, died of sorrow at the end of 1533.

But, of all his assistants, the one whom Michael Angelo loved the most, and to whom his affection assured immortality, was Francesco d'Amadore, surnamed Urbino, of Castel Durante. He was in Michael Angelo's service from 1530 and worked under his orders on the mausoleum of Julius II. Michael Angelo was anxious as to what would become of him after he had gone.

"'What will you do if I die?' he once said to him.

"'Serve another,' replied Urbino.

"'Poor fellow!' said his master, 'I will protect you from want,' and he gave him 2000 crowns at one time—a present such as only an emperor or a pope could have made."[2]

Urbino was the first to die.[3] The day after his death Michael Angelo wrote to his nephew:

"Urbino died at four o'clock yesterday afternoon. He has left me so afflicted and so troubled that it would

[1] In 1531. [2] Vasari.

[3] On December 3, 1555, a few days after the death of Michael Angelo's last brother, Sigismondo.

have been easier to die with him; because of the love I bore him. And well did he merit that love. For he was a worthy, loyal and faithful man. His death seems to have taken all life out of me, and I cannot recover my tranquillity."

His sorrow was so profound that three months afterwards he wrote this celebrated letter to Vasari:

"Messer GIORGIO, my dear Friend,—

"I find it hard to write, but, in answer to your letter, I must send you a few lines. You know that Urbino is dead, to my great loss and unspeakable grief; for he was a great favour from God to me. The favour is that whereas when living he kept me alive, in dying he has taught me not to fear death, but to desire it. I had him twenty-six years, and ever found him devoted and faithful. I made him rich, and hoped for his support in my old age, but he has been taken away, and I can only hope to see him again in Paradise, where God, by the very happy death which He granted him, has shown he must be. He was more grieved for leaving me a prey to the vexations of the world than at death itself. The better part of me has gone with him, and nothing is left to me but infinite sorrow." [1]

In his confusion he begged his nephew to come to see him in Rome. Leonardo and Cassandra, uneasy over his sorrow, came and found him in a very weak state.

[1] February 23, 1556.
Michael Angelo concluded as follows: "I commend myself to you, and beg you to present my excuses to Messer Benvenuto (Cellini) if I do not reply to his letter. But these thoughts cause me so much sorrow that I am incapable of writing."
See also poem clxii: "Et piango et parlo del mio morto Urbino . . ."

But he gained fresh strength in the obligation which Urbino had imposed upon him—that of undertaking the guardianship of his sons, one of whom was his godson and bore his name.[1]

He made other friendships—strange ones. Through a desire for reaction (so strong in the case of men of robust nature) against all the constraints imposed by society, he loved to surround himself with simple-minded men, who were given to uttering unexpected flashes of wit and had free manners—men who were not made like all the world. There was Topolino, a stonecutter of Carrara, "who thought himself a good sculptor, and who never loaded a boat for Rome without sending three or four little figures of his own, at which Michael Angelo died of laughing."[2] Menighella, a clumsy painter of Valdarno, was another. "He came to see Michael Angelo from time to time and got him to draw St. Roch or St. Anthony to paint and sell to the peasants. Michael Angelo, whom it was hard to persuade to work for kings, put aside everything to make simple designs suitable to his friend's style and requirements as Menighella said. Among other things he did a model of a Crucifix of great beauty."[3] For a barber, who dabbled in painting, he designed a cartoon representing the "Stigmatisation of St. Francis." Other friends of his were: one of his

[1] To Cornelia, the wife of Urbino, he wrote letters full of affection, promising to take the little Michael Angelo into his house; "to show him more love than he showed to even the children of his nephew Leonardo, and to teach him all that Urbino had desired him to learn" (March 28, 1557). He did not pardon Cornelia for re-marrying in 1559.

[2] *See* Vasari for an account of his facetious ways.

[3] The same.

JESSE

In the Sistine Chapel

Roman workmen, who worked on the mausoleum of Julius II., and who thought he had become a great sculptor, without having taken care, because, by following Michael Angelo's instructions implicitly, he had produced from a block of marble, to his astonishment, a beautiful statue; the facetious goldsmith, Piloto, surnamed Lasca; the lazy Indaco, that singular painter "who loved chattering as much as he detested painting," and who was accustomed to say that "continual work without pleasure was unworthy of a Christian";[1] and especially the ridiculous and inoffensive Giuliano Bugiardini, for whom Michael Angelo felt special sympathy.

"Giuliano possessed a natural kindness, a simple manner of living, without either wickedness or envy, which greatly pleased Michael Angelo. His only fault was a too great love for his own works. But Michael Angelo used to consider him happy, because he was contented with his knowledge, whereas he himself was never fully satisfied with his own works. . . . On one occasion, Messer Ottaviano de' Medici asked Giuliano to paint Michael Angelo's portrait. Giuliano set to work, and, after keeping Michael Angelo seated for two hours, without speaking a word, said to him: 'Michael Angelo, come and see how I have caught your expression.' Michael Angelo rose, and looking at the portrait, said, laughing: 'What the devil have you done? You have put one eye on my temple—look here a moment.' At these words Giuliano was beside himself. Looking several times at the portrait and his model, alternately, he boldly replied: 'I do not notice it, but sit down and I will correct it, if need be.' Michael Angelo, who knew how the effect had arisen, sat down, smiling, in front of Giuliano, who, after

[1] Vasari.

looking at him and his picture several times, rose and said: 'It seems to me that the eye is as I have drawn it, and nature shows it thus.' 'Well, then,' responded Michael Angelo laughing, 'it is a fault of nature. Continue and don't spare the colour.'"[1]

So much indulgence, which Michael Angelo was not accustomed to show to other men, but which he lavished on these insignificant beings, does not imply less of that bantering humour which makes merry over human stupidities[2] than of affectionate pity for these poor wretches who imagined themselves to be great artists, and who, perhaps, inspired meditation on his own folly—composite of a good deal of melancholic and farcical irony.

[1] Vasari.

[2] Like almost all melancholy-souled men, Michael Angelo's humour was sometimes comic. He wrote burlesque poems after the manner of Berni. But his buffoonery was ever rugged and bordered on tragedy. For instance, see his mournful caricature of the infirmities of old age ("Poems," lxxxi), and his parody of a love poem (the same, xxxvii).

III

SOLITUDE

L'anima mia, che chon la morte parla . . .[1]

Thus he lived alone with his humble friends—his assistants and his madcap acquaintances, and with other friends still more humble—his domestic animals, his fowls and his cats.[2]

In reality he was alone; and he became so more and more. "I am always alone," he wrote to his nephew in 1548, "and I speak to no one." Little by little he had separated himself not only from man's society but even from their interests, their needs, their pleasures and their thoughts.

The last passion which attached him to the men of his time—his republicanism—had become extinguished in its turn. Once more it had sprung into life at the time of the two serious illnesses of 1544 and 1546, when Michael Angelo had been received by his friend Riccio at the house of the Strozzi, who were republicans and proscripts. Convalescent, Michael Angelo begged Robert Strozzi, a refugee in Lyons, to remind the King of France

[1] "Poems," cx.

[2] "The fowls and Messer Cock triumph," wrote Angiolini to him in 1553, during one of his absences. "But the cats are disconsolate at seeing you no more, although they do not lack food."

of his promises, adding that if Francis I. came and re-established liberty in Florence he would undertake to raise a bronze equestrian statue to him on the Piazza della Signoria at his own expense.[1] In 1546 he gave to Strozzi, in recognition of the hospitality he had received, the two "Slaves," which Strozzi presented to Francis I.

But this was merely an outburst of political fever—the last one. In some passages of his Dialogues with Giannotti, in 1545, he expresses almost Tolstoy's thoughts on the uselessness of struggling and of non-resistance to evil.

"It is a piece of great presumption to dare to kill any one, for we cannot know with certainty whether his death will lead to any good or whether any good will come from his death. Consequently I cannot bear those men who believe that it is impossible to produce good unless they begin with evil—that is, with murder. Times change, new events arise, desires are transformed and men grow tired. . . . And, after all, the unforeseen always happens."

The same Michael Angelo who had spoken in favour of tyrannicide now grew irritated against revolutionaries who imagined they could change the world at a stroke. He well knew that he had been one of them, and it was himself whom he condemned bitterly. Like Hamlet, he had doubts about everything now—his thoughts, his hatreds, and everything he had believed. He turned his back on action.

"That honest man," he wrote, "who replied to some one: 'I am not a statesman, I am an honest man and a man of common sense,' spoke the truth. If only my

[1] Letter from Riccio to Ruberto di Filippo Strozzi (July 21, 1544).

works in Rome gave me as little worry as affairs of State!"[1]

The truth was he no longer hated. He could no longer hate. It was too late.

> Ahime, lasso chi pur tropp' aspetta,
> Ch' i' gionga a suoi conforti tanto tardj!
> Ancor, se ben riguardj,
> Un generoso, alter' e nobil core
> Perdon' et porta a chi l' offend' amore.[2]

He lived at Macel de' Corvi, on the forum of Trajan. There he had a house with a little garden. He occupied it with a valet,[3] a servant and his domestic animals. He was not fortunate with his servants, "all of whom," says Vasari, "were dirty and negligent." He often changed them and complained bitterly.[4] He had as many difficulties with them as Beethoven had; and his "Ricordi" (Notes), like Beethoven's Notebooks, mention

[1] Letter to his nephew Leonardo (1547).

[2] "Poems," cix, 64.

"Woe to me, fatigued by too long a wait, woe to me who attain too late the goal I had desired! And now, do you not know it? A generous, proud and noble heart pardons, and offers love to he who has offended it."

Michael Angelo here imagines a dialogue between the poet and a Florentine exile. It is possible that he wrote the poem after the assassination of Alessandro de' Medici by Lorenzino in 1536. It appeared for the first time in 1543, with music by Giacomo Archadelt.

[3] Among his servants I note, out of curiosity, a Frenchman, named Richard—"Riccardo franzese" (June 18, 1552. "Ricordi," p. 606).

[4] "I should like to find," he wrote to Leonardo, "a good, clean servant. But that is very difficult: they are all dirty and debauched ('Son tutte puttane e porche') . . . I give ten jules a month. I live poorly, but I pay well" ("Letters," August 16, 1550).

these household quarrels. "Oh, that she had never been here!" he wrote in 1560, after dismissing a servant named Girolama.

His room was as dark as a tomb,[1] "spiders created there a thousand pieces of work and unwound their little distaffs."[2] Halfway up the staircase he had painted a figure of Death, bearing a coffin on his shoulders.[3]

He lived like a poor man, ate hardly anything,[4] and, "being unable to sleep, used to get up at night to work with his chisel. He had made a helmet of paper, and kept a lighted candle above the middle of his head, which lighted the work without embarrassing his hands."[5]

[1] "La mia scura tomba . . ." ("Poems," lxxxi).

[2] Dov' è Aragn' e mill' opre et lavoranti
Et fan di lor filando fusaiuolo.
(The same.)

[3] On the coffin was the following epitaph:
Io dico a voi, ch' al mondo avete dato
L'anima e 'l corpo e lo spirto 'nsieme:
In questa cassa oscura è 'l vostro lato."
(The same, cxxxvii.)

"I tell you, you who gave soul, body, and spirit to the world at one and the same time—in this dark box you hold everything."

[4] "He was very sober. When a youth he remained content with a little bread and wine, in order to devote himself entirely to work. In his old age, from the time he painted 'The Last Judgment,' he used to drink a little, but only in the evening, when the day's work was over, and in the most moderate manner. Although he was rich, he lived like a poor man. Never or rarely did a friend eat with him. He did not like presents, as he always felt obliged to make a return. His sobriety made him watchful and caused him to need very little sleep" (Vasari).

[5] Vasari, noticing that he did not use wax lights, but candles made of goat fat, sent him forty pounds of the latter. His servant brought them to him, but Michael Angelo refused to accept them. "Sir," said the servant, "they have broken my arms, and I don't want to take them back to the house.

The older he grew the more solitary he became. He felt the need, when all Rome was asleep, of taking refuge in nocturnal work. Silence was a blessing to him, night a friend.

"O Night, O sweet though sombre time; when every effort ends in peace, he who extols you clearly sees and comprehends, and he who honours you is full of discernment. You cut with your scissors every weary thought, which the damp shadow and the quiet penetrate; and often from this earth you carry me, in imagination, to that heaven where I hope to go. O shadow of death, which stops all misery, the enemy of the soul and the heart, O supreme and effectual remedy of the afflicted, you render health to our ailing flesh, you dry our tears, you relieve us of our fatigue, and you rid the good of hatred and disgust."[1]

Vasari visited the old man one night and found him in his deserted house engaged on his tragic "Pietà" and wrapped in meditation.

"When Vasari knocked, Michael Angelo rose and came to the door, with a candlestick in his hand. Vasari wished to look at the piece of sculpture, but Michael Angelo let the light fall, so that they were in darkness. And whilst Urbino was fetching another, the Master turned

If you do not want them, I will stick them in this heap of mud which is before your door and will light them all." Michael Angelo replied: "Put them down then, I do not want you to play pranks at my door" (Vasari).

[1] *See* Appendix, xxii ("Poems, lxxviii).

Frey dates this poem about 1546, when "The Last Judgment" and the Pauline Chapel were being painted. Grimm considers that it was written a little later, about 1554.

Another poem on night ("Poems," lxxvii) is of the greatest poetical beauty, but is more literary and a little affected.

towards Vasari and said: 'I am so old that death frequently drags at my mantle to take me, and one day my person will fall like this light.'"

He was absorbed by the idea of death: from day to day it became gloomier and more attractive. "There is not one of my thoughts," he said to Vasari, "on which death is not deeply engraved."[1] It seemed to him, now, to be the only happiness in life.

"When my past is before me—and that is so every moment—I then well know, O false world! the error and the fault of the human race. He who ends by consenting to listen to your flatteries and your vain delights prepares painful sorrows for his soul. He knows well—he who has had experience—how often you promise the peace and prosperity which you do not possess, nor ever will. Consequently, the least favoured being is he who remains the longest here below; whilst he who lives the shortest time the more easily returns to Heaven. . . .[2]

"Having reached my last hour, after many years of life, I tardily recognise, O world, your charms! You promise peace, and you possess it not; you promise rest, which dies before birth. . . . This I say and know from experience: he alone is elected to Heaven whose death follows closely on his birth."[3]

On his nephew Leonardo fêting the birth of his son, Michael Angelo blamed him severely.

"This pomp displeases me. It is not permissible to laugh when the whole world is weeping. It is senseless

[1] "Non nasce in me pensiero che non vi sia dentro sculpita la morte" ("Letters," June 22, 1555).

[2] *See* Appendix, xxiii ("Poems," cix, 32).

[3] The same, xxiv (the same, cix, 34).

to celebrate such a fête in honour of one who has just been born. You should reserve your gladness for the day on which a man who has lived well dies." [1]

And in the following year he congratulated him on having lost his second son shortly after birth.

Nature, which, through his passionate existence and the peculiar character of his intellectual genius, he had up to then neglected,[2] was a source of consolation to him in his declining years. In September 1556, when fleeing from Rome, which was threatened by the Spanish troops of the Duke of Alba, he passed by Spoleto and there remained five weeks, in the midst of the oak and olive woods, penetrated through and through by the serene splendour of the autumn. It was with regret that he returned to Rome, to which he was recalled at the end of October. "I have left more than half of myself over there," he wrote to Vasari, "for verily peace is to be found only in the woods."

Pace non si trova senon ne boschi.[3]

And on returning to Rome the old man of eighty-two composed a beautiful poem to the glory of the fields and

[1] Letter to Vasari, dated "I know not what day of April 1554" ("A di non so quanti d'aprile 1554").

[2] In spite of the years which he spent away from towns, at Carrara or at Seravezza, he had always paid little attention to nature. Landscape has a very small place in his work; it is reduced to a few summary indications in his frescoes of the Sistine Chapel. In this respect, Michael Angelo differs from his contemporaries Raphael, Titian, Perugino, Francia, and Leonardo da Vinci. He despised the landscapes of the Flemish masters, then much in favour. "Rags," he said, "ruins, green fields shaded with trees, rivers, and bridges—what are called landscapes—and with many figures here and there" ("Dialogues" of Francis of Holland).

[3] "Letters," December 28, 1556.

country life, which he contrasted with city vanities. This was his last poetical work and it contains all the freshness of youth.[1]

But in nature, as in art and as in love, it was God for whom he was seeking, and to whom he daily drew nearer. He had always been a believer. Though he was not to be easily deceived either by priests or monks or devotees of either sex, and though, should an opportunity offer, he treated them without tenderness,[2] there was

[1] I refer to the unfinished poem of one hundred and fifteen lines beginning with the words:

> Nuovo piacere e di magiore stima
> Veder l'ardite capre sopr' un sasso
> Montar, pasciendo or questa or quella cima . . .

"It is a fresh and ever relished pleasure to see the daring goats climb upon a rocky hill, browzing first on one and then upon another peak . . ."

I here follow the opinion of Frey, who dates the poem October to December 1556. Thode attributes it to Michael Angelo's youth, but does not give, it seems to me, a sufficiently good reason for so doing.

[2] In 1548, when dissuading his nephew Leonardo from making a pilgrimage to Loreto, he advised him rather to spend his money in charity. "For if you give money to the priests, God knows what they will do with it!" (April 7, 1548).

Sebastiano del Piombo having to paint a monk at San Pietro in Montorio, Michael Angelo thought that this monk would spoil everything. "The monks having caused the perdition of the world, which is so large, it would not be astonishing if they ruined a little chapel."

At the time when Michael Angelo was seeking a wife for his nephew, a devout lady came to see him, and, after preaching him a sermon and exhorting him to piety, offered him for Leonardo a pious girl, who possessed good principles. "I told her in reply," wrote Michael Angelo, "that she would do much better to occupy herself with spinning and weaving than in fussing around people in this way and bargaining with holy things" ("Letters," July 19, 1549).

He wrote fierce Savonarola-like poems against those guilty

never, it would seem, the slightest doubt in his faith. At the time of the illness or death of his father and brothers, his first concern was ever that they should receive the sacrament.[1] He had a boundless confidence in prayer, "which he regarded as more efficacious than all the medicines in the world";[2] he attributed to its power all the good which had come to him and believed that it preserved him from evil. In his solitude he was subject to crises of mystic adoration. By chance the recollection of one of these has been handed down to us: a contemporary narrative shows us the ecstatic face of the hero of the Sistine, praying, alone, at night, in his garden in Rome, and imploring with his sorrowful eyes the starry sky.[3]

of sacrilege and simony in Rome. For instance, the sonnet commencing with the words:

> Qua si fa elmj di chalicj e spade,
> E 'l sangue di Christo si vend' a giumelle . . .

"There, with chalices, they make swords and helmets; and the blood of Christ is sold with both hands . . ."

[1] Letter to Buonarroto, on the subject of his father's illness (November 23, 1516). Letter to Leonardo, on the subject of the death of Giovan Simone (January 1548): "I should like to know if he confessed and if he received the sacrament. If I knew that this was so, I should suffer less . . ."

[2] "Più credo agli orazioni che alle medicine" (Letter to Leonardo, April 25, 1549).

[3] ". . . In the year of Our Lord 1513, in the first year of the pontificate of Leo X., Michael Angelo, who was then in Rome —and I believe, unless I am mistaken, that it was in the autumn —one night, in the open air, in a garden of his house, prayed and raised his eyes to heaven. Suddenly he saw a marvellous meteor, a triangular sign, with three rays: one, pointing towards the east, bright and smooth, like the blade of a polished sword, but with a hook at the end; the other, the colour of a ruby, blue red, stretching over Rome; and the third, the colour of fire and forked, and of such a length that it reached as far as Florence . . . On seeing this divine sign Michael Angelo went

[illegible]

[illegible] "I [illegible]

[illegible] the same [illegible]

[illegible] successively in the g[illegible]

[illegible] was absorbed [illegible]

[illegible] rings in the h[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] in a stormy s[illegible]

[illegible] where we had [illegible]

[illegible] and somewhat [illegible]

[illegible] insisted the s[illegible]

[illegible] "Trinita, diligentia [illegible]

[illegible] by Their [illegible]

[illegible] a medal bearing [illegible]

[illegible] in the reverse [illegible]

[illegible] with the inscription.

[illegible] " [illegible]

[illegible] at Christ," "Christ [illegible]

[illegible] "[illegible]."

an account and a reason for every good and impious
e. Consequently, I recognise now how full of errors
the passionate illusion which made me turn art into
dol and a monarch ; and I see clearly what every man
res for his hurt. What are amorous, vain and
ous thoughts now that I approach two deaths ? Of
I am certain, and the other threatens me. Neither
nting nor sculpture are any longer capable of calming
soul, turned towards that divine love which opens,
take us, its arms upon the cross."[1]

But the purest flower which faith and suffering sent
th in the old sorrowful heart of Michael Angelo was
vine charity.

This man, whom enemies accused of avarice,[2] never

[1] Appendix, xxv ("Poems," cxlvii).

This sonnet, which Frey rightly considers the finest that
ichael Angelo ever wrote, dates from 1555–1556.

A large number of other poems express, in a form that is less
autiful but with equal emotion and faith, a similar sentiment
ee Appendix, xxvi).

[2] These rumours were circulated by Aretino and Bandinelli.
he Duke of Urbino's Ambassador related, in 1542, to any one
who would listen to him that Michael Angelo had become immensely
ich by lending upon usury the money he had received from
Julius II. for the monument he had not executed. Michael
Angelo had, to a certain extent, shown that there was ground
or these accusations by the hardness which he sometimes
showed in business—for instance, in the case of Signorelli
senior, against whom he proceeded in 1518 for a loan made in
1513—and by a peasant-like instinct for hoarding, a rapacity
which was united with his natural generosity. He amassed
money and property, but, so to say, in a manner that was
mechanical and hereditary. In reality, he was extremely
negligent in business. He did not keep accounts. He did not
know what he possessed, and he gave freely. His family drew
ceaselessly on his capital. He made royal presents to his friends
and servants. The majority of his works were given, not sold ;

ceased, the whole of his life, to assist the unfortunate, both known and unknown. Not only did he ever show the most touching affection for his old servants and for those of his father—for a certain Mona Margherita, whom he took into his house after the death of old Buonarroti, and whose decease caused him "more distress than if she had been a sister";[1] for a humble carpenter, who had worked on the scaffolding of the Sistine Chapel, and for whose daughter he provided a dowry;[2] but he was constantly giving to the poor, and especially to the disreputable poor. He liked to associate his nephew and niece with these acts of charity, to inspire them with a taste for similar actions, and to get them to carry them out, without his name being mentioned, for he desired that his charity should remain a secret.[3] "He loved

and he worked gratuitously at St. Peter's. No one condemned love of money more severely than he did. "Avidity of gain is a very great sin," he wrote to his brother Buonarroto. Vasari indignantly protests against the calumnies of the enemies of Michael Angelo, and recalls the many things his master gave: to Tommaso de' Cavalieri, Bindo Altoviti, Sebastiano del Piombo, and Gherardo Perini, priceless drawings; to Antonio Mini, the "Leda," with all the cartoons and models; to Bartolommeo Bettini, an admirable "Cupid kissing Venus"; to the Marquis of Vasto, a "Noli me tangere"; to Roberto Strozzi, the two "Slaves"; to his servant Antonio, "Christ taken down from the Cross," &c. "I do not think," he concludes, "that a man who gave such things, worth thousands of scudi, can be taxed with avarice."

1 Letters to Giovan Simone (1533); and to Leonardo Buonarroti (November 1540).

2 Vasari.

3 "It seems to me that you neglect almsgiving too much," he wrote to Leonardo (1547).

"You write to me that you would like to give this woman four gold crowns for the love of God. That pleases me" (August 1547).

"Be careful to give in cases where there is real need, and

better to do good than to be seen doing it."[1] By a trait of exquisite delicacy, he thought above all of poor young girls, for whom he secretly sought to provide small dowries, in order to enable them to marry or to enter a convent.

"Try to find out a needy citizen who has a daughter to marry or to put in a convent," he wrote to his nephew. "I refer to those who, being in need, are ashamed to beg. Give him the money I send you, but secretly; and act in such a manner that you will not let yourself be deceived. . . ."[2]

And elsewhere he says:

"Inform me if you are acquainted with yet another noble citizen who is in very great need, and especially if he has girls at home. It would please me to do him a kind turn, for the salvation of my soul."[3]

not to give through friendship, but for the love of God. . . . Do not say whence the money comes" (March 29, 1549).

"You are not to mention me in any way" (September 1547).

"It would please me better if you expended the money you spend in presents for me in alms for the love of God, for I believe there is much poverty in our midst" (1558).

"Old as I am, I should like to do a little good in almsgiving. For I cannot and know not how to do good in any other way" (July 18, 1561).

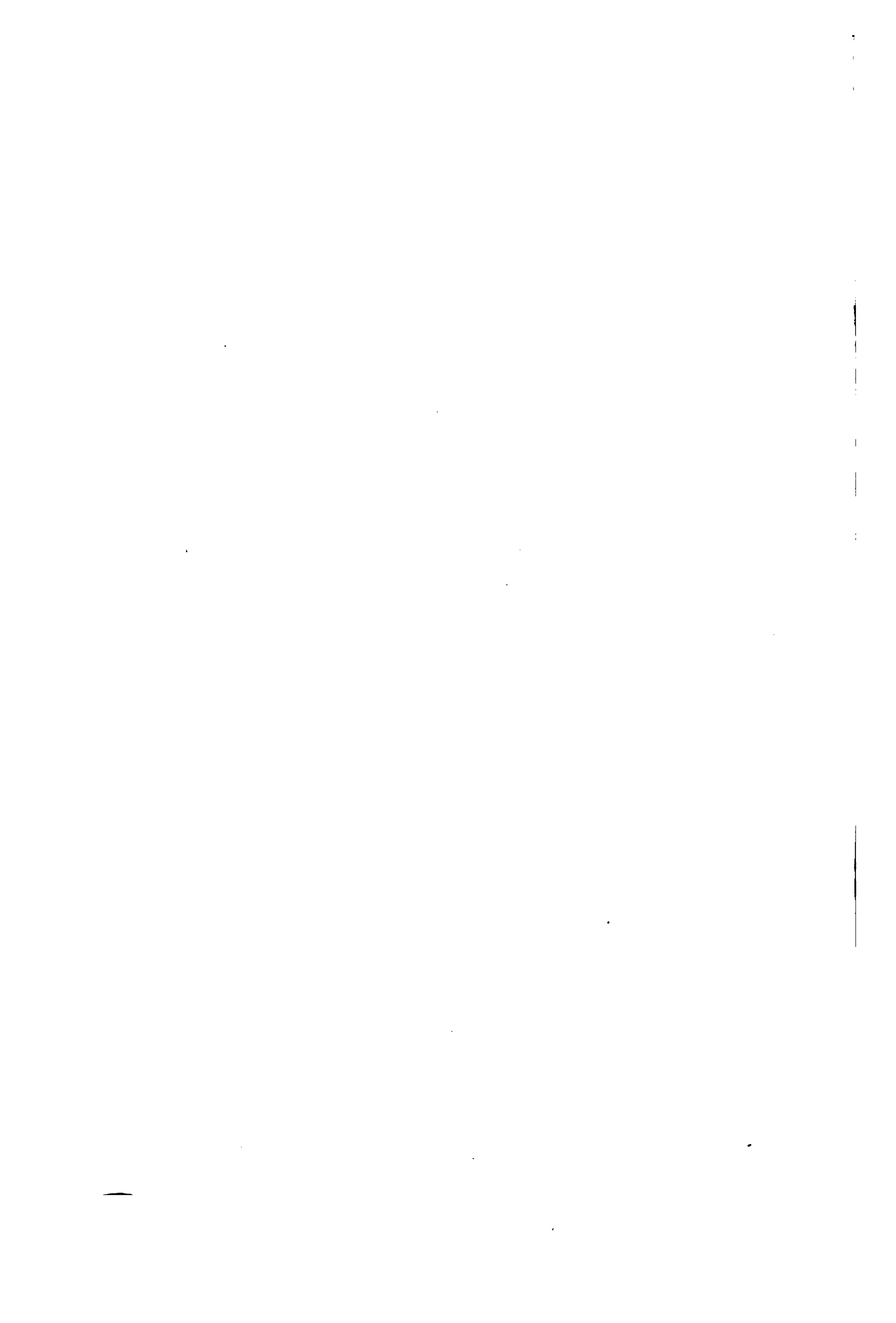
[1] Condivi.

[2] Letter to Leonardo (August 1547).

[3] The same (December 20, 1550).

Elsewhere he makes inquiries about one of the Cerretani, who had a daughter to put in a convent (March 29, 1549). His niece Cecca interceded with him on behalf of a poor girl who was entering a convent, and, quite happy, he sent her the sum for which she asked (to Leonardo, May 31, 1556).

"To marry a poor young girl," he says somewhere, "is also a way of giving alms."



EPILOGUE

DEATH

> . . . Et l'osteria
> È morte. . . .[1]

DEATH, so long desired and so slow in coming—

> c'a miseri la morte è pigra e tardi—[2]

came at last.

Notwithstanding a robust constitution, sustained by the monkish rigour of his life, he had not been spared from illness. He had never entirely recovered from his two bad attacks of fever of 1544 and 1546. Stone,[3] gout,[4] and sufferings of all kinds completed his ruin. In a sadly burlesque poem of his last years he draws a picture of his wretched body, undermined by infirmities.

"I live alone and wretched, confined like the pith within the bark of a tree. . . . My voice is like a wasp imprisoned within a sack of skin and bone. . . . My teeth rattle like the keys of a musical instrument. . . .

[1] "Poems," lxxxi.

[2] "For, to wretched men, death is lazy" ("Poems," lxxiii, 30).

[3] In March 1549. He was recommended the waters of Viterbo, which he found did him good (Letters to Leonardo). He again suffered from stone in July 1559.

[4] In July 1555.

My face is a scarecrow. . . There is a ceaseless buzzing in my ears—in one a spider spins its web, in the other a cricket chirps all night. . . . My catarrh, which causes a rattle in my throat, will not allow me to sleep. . . . This is the end to which art, which promised me glory, has brought me. Poor, overwhelmed old man, you are destroyed, unless death comes quickly to your aid. . . . Fatigue has quartered, torn and broken me, and the hostelry which awaits me—is Death. . . ."[1]

"My dear Messer Giorgio," he wrote to Vasari in June 1555, "you will recognise from my handwriting that I have reached the twenty-fourth hour. . . ."[2]

Vasari, who came to see him in the spring of 1560, found him extremely weak. He hardly ever went out, and slept very little. Everything led people to presume that he had not long to live. In becoming weaker he became more tender and easily gave way to tears.

"I have been to see my great Michael Angelo," wrote Vasari. "He did not expect my visit, and showed as much emotion as a father would have done on finding a lost son. He threw his arms around my neck and weeping with pleasure ('lacrymando per dolcezza') kissed me a thousand times."[3]

He had lost nothing, however, as regards lucidity of mind and energy. On the occasion of the visit related by Vasari he conversed at length with him on various

[1] A free translation (*see* Appendix, xxvii) ("Poems, lxxxi).

[2] Letter to Vasari (June 22, 1555). "I am not only old," he had already written to Varchi, in 1549, "but I count among the dead" ("Non solo son vecchio, ma quasi nel numero de' morti").

[3] Letter from Vasari to Cosimo de' Medici (April 8, 1560).

artistic subjects; gave him advice concerning his work, and accompanied him on horseback to St. Peter's.[1]

In the month of August 1561 he had an attack. Having sat for three consecutive hours with naked feet, drawing, he was suddenly seized with pains and fell into convulsions. His servant Antonio found him unconscious. Cavalieri, Bandini and Calcagni hastened to his house; but on their arrival Michael Angelo had come to himself. A few days afterwards he began to go out again on horseback and to work on the drawings for the Porta Pia.[2]

The intractable old man would, under no pretext whatsoever, allow people to look after him. His friends were continually tortured by the thought that he was alone with negligent and unscrupulous servants and at the mercy of a fresh attack.

His heir Leonardo had formerly received such rude rebuffs when he had wished to come to Rome to watch over his uncle's health that he no longer dared to risk the journey. In July 1563 he inquired of him through Daniello da Volterra if he would like to see him, and, in view of the suspicions which his visit might inspire in Michael Angelo's distrustful mind, added that his affairs were prospering; that he was rich and had no longer need of anything. The roguish old man replied that; since this was so, he was delighted, and that he would give the little he possessed to the poor.

A month later Leonardo, by no means satisfied with the reply, returned to the charge and expressed the anxiety he felt on the subject of his health and those who surrounded him. This time Michael Angelo sent him a

[1] He was eighty-five years of age.

[2] It was then that he recollected the contract he had made, sixty years before, with the heirs of Pius III., for the Piccolomini altar of Sienna, and wished to carry it out.

furious letter, which shows the astonishing vitality of this man of eighty-eight—six months before his death.

"I see from your letter that you believe certain envious rascals, who, because they can neither rob me, nor do what they like with me, write you a budget of lies. They are a band of scamps; and you are so stupid that you place faith in them on the subject of my affairs, as though I were a child. Send them about their business, they are people who bring only trouble with them, who inspire but envy, and who live the life of beggars. You say that I suffer from the point of view of service; but I tell you that, as regards servants, I could not be more faithfully served nor better treated in every way. And as to the fears of robbery to which you allude, I tell you that the people who are in my house are such that I can rest in peace as regards that, and have confidence in them. Therefore, think of yourself and not of my business. For I know how to defend myself in case of need and am not a child. Keep well!"[1]

Leonardo was not alone in feeling anxious over the heritage. All Italy was Michael Angelo's heir, especially the Duke of Tuscany and the Pope, who were very desirous not to lose the drawings and plans relative to the constructions of San Lorenzo and St. Peter. In June 1563, at the instigation of Vasari, Duke Cosimo charged his ambassador, Averardo Serristori, in view of Michael Angelo's physical decline, to enter into a secret understanding with the Pope, to the effect that a strict watch should be exercised over his servants and all who frequented his house. In case of sudden death an inventory of all his possessions—drawings, cartoons, papers, and money—was immediately to be drawn up,

[1] Letter to Leonardo (August 21, 1563).

so that nothing, in the disorder, should be carried off. They took very good care, of course, not to let Michael Angelo know anything of this.[1]

These precautions were not useless. The hour had come.

Michael Angelo's last letter is dated December 28, 1563. For a year past he had written hardly a line himself; he dictated and signed. Daniello da Volterra looked after his correspondence.

He still worked. On February 12, 1564, he spent the whole day on his feet, working at his "Pietà."[2] On the 14th he was seized with fever. Tiberio Calcagni, informed of what had happened, hastened to his house, but found that he was out. Notwithstanding the rain he had gone for a walk in the Campagna. When he returned Calcagni told him that he had been unreasonable in going out in such weather.

"What matter?" replied Michael Angelo. "I am ill and nowhere can I find repose."

The unsteadiness of his speech, the look in his eyes, and the colour of his face made Calcagni very anxious. "The end may not come immediately," he wrote at once to Leonardo, "but I fear it is not far off."[3]

The same day Michael Angelo begged Daniello da Volterra to come and remain with him. Daniello sent for the doctor, Federigo Donati, and, on the 15th, at Michael Angelo's request, wrote to Leonardo to say that he could

[1] Vasari.

[2] The unfinished "Pietà" of the Rondanini Palace (Letter from Daniello da Volterra to Leonardo, June 11, 1564).

[3] Letter from Tiberio Calcagni to Leonardo, February 14, 1564.

come to see him, "but in taking every precaution, since the roads were bad."[1]

"I have just left him," he added, "a little after eight o'clock, in full possession of his faculties and tranquil in his mind, but overwhelmed by a persistent torpor. He was so inconvenienced by it this afternoon, between three and four o'clock, that he tried to go out on horseback, as he was accustomed to do every evening when it was fine. But the cold weather, combined with the weakness in his head and legs, prevented him, so he turned back and sat in an armchair—which he much preferred to his bed—near the chimney."

The faithful Cavalieri was by his side.

It was not until the day before his death that he would consent to go to bed. Fully conscious and surrounded by his friends and servants, he dictated his will. He bequeathed "his soul to God and his body to the earth." He requested to be allowed "to return at least dead" to his dear Florence. Then he passed

Da l'orribil procella in dolce calma.[2]

It was a Friday in February, about five o'clock in the afternoon.[3] Evening was drawing in. . . . "The last day of his life, the first in the kingdom of peace! . . ."[4] had come.

[1] Letter from Daniello da Volterra to Vasari (March 17, 1564).

[2] "Poems," clii.

[3] Friday, February 18, 1564. Tommaso de' Cavalieri, Daniello da Volterra, Diomede Leoni, the two doctors Federigo Donati and Gherardo Fidelissimi, and the servant Antonio del Franzese were present at his death. Leonardo did not reach Rome until three days afterwards.

[4] De giorni mie' . . .
L'ultimo prima in piu tranquilla corte . . .
("Poems," cix, 41)

He had found rest at last. He had attained the object of his desires—he had left time behind him.

> Beata l'alma, ove non corre tempo ![1]

Such was this life of divine sorrow.

> Fuss' io pur lui ! c' a tal fortuna nato,
> Per l'aspro esilio suo con la virtute
> Dare' del mondo il piu felice stato ![2]

[1] " Happy is the soul, where time runs no longer " (" Poems," lix).
[2] " Poems," cix, 37.

APPENDIX

PART I

POEMS BY MICHAEL ANGELO

I

See p. 38

Signor, se vero è alcun proverbio antico
Questo è ben quel, che chi puo mai non vuole.
Tu ai creduto à favole e parole
E premiato chi è del ver nimico.
I' sono e fui gia tuo buon servo antico,
A te son dato come e raggi al sole,
E del mie tempo non ti incresce o dole,
E men ti piaccio, se piu m' afatico.
Gia sperai ascender per la sua alteza,
E 'l gusto peso e la potente spada
Fussi al bixognio e non la voce d'echo.
Ma 'l cielo è quel ch' ogni virtu dispreza
Locarla al mondo, se vuol, c'altri vada
A prender fructo d'un arbor, ch' secho.

("Poems," Frey's edition, iii.)

II

See p. 50

I' o gia facto un gozo in questo stento,
Come fa l'aqua a gacti in Lombardia
Over d' altro paese che si sia,
Ch' a forza 'l ventre apicha socto 'l mento.

La barba al cielo e la memoria sento
In sullo scrignio e 'l pecto fo d'arpia,
E 'l pennel sopra 'l viso tuctavia
Mel fa gocciando un richo pavimento.
E lombi entrati mi son nella peccia,
E fo del cul per chontrapeso groppa,
E passi senza gli ochi muovo invano.
Dinanzi mi s'allunga la chorteccia
E per piegarsi adietro si ragroppa,
E tendormi com' archo soriano.
  Pero fallace e strano
Surgie il iuditio, che la mente porta,
Che mal si tra' per cerboctana torta.
  La mia pictura morta
Difendi orma', Giovanni, e 'l mio onore,
Non sendo in loco bon ne io pictore.

("Poems," ix.)

III

See p. 52

Grato e felice, c' a tuo feroci mali
Istare e vincer mi fu gia conciesso;
Or lasso, il pecto vo bagniando spesso
Chontra mie voglie e so, quante tu vali.
E se i dannosi e preteriti strali
Al segno del mie cor non fur ma' presso,
Or puoi a cholpi vendichar te stesso
Di que begli ochi, e fien tucti mortali.
Da quanti lacci ancor, da quante rete
Vagho uccellecto per malignia sorte
Champa molti anni per morire po' peggio,
Tal di mi, Donne, amor, chome vedete,
Per darmi in questa eta piu crudel morte
Champato m' a gran tempo, chome veggio.

("Poems," ii.)

IV

See p. 53

Quanto si gode, lieta e ben contesta
Di fior, sopra crin d' or d' una, grillanda,
Che l' altro inanzi l' uno all' altro manda,
Chome ch' il primo sia a baciar la testa!
Contenta è tucto il giorno quella vesta
Che serra 'l pecto e poi par che si spanda,
E quel c' oro filato si domanda
Le guanci' e 'l collo di tochar non resta.
Ma piu lieto quel nastro par che goda,
Dorato im punta, con si facte tempre,
Che preme e tocha il pecto, che gli allaccia.
E la schiecta cintura, che s'annoda,
Mi par dir seco: qui vo' stringier sempre.—
Or che farebon dunche le mie braccia!

("Poems," vii.)

V

See pp. 53 and 54

. . . .

Quando un di sto, che veder non ti posso,
Non posso trovar pace in luogo ignuno;
Se po' ti veggo, mi s'appicca adosso,
Come suole il mangiar fa al digiuno.

. . . .

Com' altri il ventre di votar si muore,
Ch' è piu 'l conforto, po' che pri' è 'l dolore.

. . . .

S' avien che la mi rida pure um poco
O mi saluti in mezzo della via,
Mi levo come polvere dal foco
O di bombarda o d' altra artiglieria.
Se mi domanda, subito m' affioco,

Perdo la voce e la riposta mia,
E subito s'arrende il gran desio.

. . . .

Tu m'entrasti per gli ochi, ond' io mi spargo
Come grappol d'agresto in un' ampolla,
Che doppo 'l collo crescie, ov' è piu largo.
Cosi l'inmagin tua, che fuor m' inmolla,
Dentro per gli ochi crescie, ond' io m' allargo,
Come pelle ove gonfia la midolla.
Entrando in me per si strecto viaggio,
Che tu mai n' esca, ardir creder non aggio.

(" Poems," xxxvi.)

VI

See p. 54, note 2

Com' aro dunque ardire
Senza vo' ma', mio ben, tenermi 'n vita,
S' io non posso al partir chiedervi aita ?
Que' singulti e que' pianti e que' sospiri
Che 'l miser core voi accompagnorno,
Madonna, duramente dimostrorno
La mia propinqua morte, e' miei martiri.
Ma se ver è, che per assenzia mai
Mia fedel servitu vadia in obblio,
Il cor lasso con voi, che non è mio.

(" Poems," xi.)

VII

See pp. 81 and 82

Per molti, Donna, anzi per mille amanti
Creata fusti e d'angelica forma ;
Or par, che 'l ciel si dorma,
S' un sol s'apropria quel ch' è dato a tanti.

Ritorna a nostri pianti
Il bel degli ochi tuo, che par che schivi
Chi del suo dono in tal miseria è nato.
— De, non turbate i vostri desir santi,
Che chi di me par che vi spogli e privi
Col gran timor non gode il gran pechato;
Che degli amanti è men felice stato
Quello ove 'l gran desir gran copia affrena
C' una miseria, di speranza piena.

("Poems," cix, 48.)

VIII

See p. 82

S'alcun se stesso al mondo ancider lice,
Po' che per morte al ciel tornar si crede,
Sarie ben giusto a chi con tanta fede
Vive servendo miser' e 'nfelice.

. . . .

("Poems," xxxviii.)

IX

See pp. 86 and 87

. . . .

Or, che nostra miseria el ciel ti tolle,
Increscati di me, che morto vivo.

. . . .

Tu se' del morir morto e facto divo
Ne tem' or piu cangiar vita ne voglia,
Che quasi senza invidia non lo scrivo.
Fortuna e 'l tempo dentro a vostra soglia
Non tenta trapassar, per chui s'adduce
Fra no' dubbia letitia e cierta doglia.

Nube non è che scuri vostra luce,
L'ore distinte a voi non fanno forza,
Caso o necessita non vi conduce.
Vostro splendor per nocte non s'ammorza
Ne crescie ma' per giorno, benche chiaro.
. . . .
Nel tuo morire el mio morire imparo,
Padre mie caro . . . .
Non è, com' alcun crede, morte il peggio
A chi l'ultimo di trasciende al primo
Per gratia ecterno appresso al divin seggio ;
Dove, Die gratia, ti prossummo e stimo
E spero di veder, se 'l freddo core
Mie ragion traggie dal terrestre limo.
E se tra 'l padre e 'l figlio octimo amore
Crescie nel ciel, cresciendo ogni virtute.

("Poems," lviii.)

X

See p. 87

Oilme, Oilme, ch' i' son tradito
Da giorni mie fugaci e dallo spechio,
Che 'l ver dice a ciascun, che fiso 'l guarda
Cosi n'avien, chi troppo al fin ritarda,
Com' o fact' io, che 'l tempo m' è fuggito,
Si trova come me 'n un giorno vechio.
Ne mi posso pentir ne m'apparechio
Ne mi consiglio con la morte appresso.
Nemico di me stesso,
Inutilmente i pianti e sospir verso,
Che non è danno pari al tempo perso.
Oilme, oilme, pur reiterando
Vo 'l mio passato tempo e non ritruovo

In tucto un giorno che sie stato mio!
Le fallaci speranze e 'l van desio,
Piangendo, amando, ardendo e sospirando —
Ch' affetto alcun mortal non mi è piu nuovo —
M' anno tenuto, ond' il conosco e pruovo:
Lontan certo dal vero,
Or com periglio pero;
Che 'l breve tempo m' è venuto manco,
Ne sarie ancor, se s'allungassi, stanco.
I' vo lasso, o'Ime, ne so ben dove;
Anzi temo, ch' il veggio, e 'l tempo andato
Me 'l mostra, ne mi val, che gli ochi chiuda.
Or che 'l tempo la scorza cangia e muda,
La morte e l'alma insieme ognior fan pruove.
La prima e la seconda, del mie stato.
E s' io non sono errato, —
Che Dio 'l voglia, ch' io sia! —
L'etterna pena mia
Nel mal libero inteso oprato vero
Veggio, Signior, ne so quel ch' io mi spero.

("Poems," xlix.)

XI

See pp. 93 and 94, note 3

Oltre qui fu, dove 'l mie amor mi tolse,
Suo merce, il core e vi è piu la vita.
Qui co' begli ochi mi promisse aita
E co' medesmi qui tor me la volse.
Quinci oltre mi lego, quivi mi sciolse.
Per me qui piansi e con doglia infinita
Da questo sasso vidi far partita
Colui, c' a me mi tolse e non mi volse.

("Poems," xxxv.)

XII

See p. 94, note 1

Per sempre a morte e prima a voi fu' dato
Sol per un ora e con dilecto tanto
Porta' bellezza e po' lasciai tal pianto,
Che 'l me' sarebbe non esser ma' nato.[1]

("Poems," lxxiii, 29.)

S' i' fu' gia vivo, tu sol, pietra, il sai,
Che qui mi serri, e s'alcun mi ricorda,
Gli par sogniar : si morte è presta e 'ngarda,
Che quel che è stato non par fusse mai.[2]

(lxxiii, 22.)

Chi qui morto mi piange indarno spera,
Bagniando l'ossa e 'l mie sepulcro, tucto
Ritornarmi com' arbor secho al fructo ;
C'uom morto non risurge a primavera.[3]

(lxxiii, 21.)

XIII

See p. 98

Veggio co be vostr' ochi un dolce lume,
Che co mie ciechi gia veder non posso.

[1] "I who have been given to you only for an hour have been given for ever to death. The more my beauty has charmed, the more tears it has left. It would have been better had I never been born."

[2] "If ever I have lived, you alone, stone which encloses me here, know it. And if any one remember me, he seems to dream. Death is so rapid that that which has been seems as though it had never been."

[3] "He who weeps for my death, bathing my bones and my tomb, hopes in vain that I shall flower again like a winter tree. Dead men do not come to life again in the spring."

Porto co vostri piedi un pondo adosso,
Che de mie zoppi non è lor costume.
Volo con le vostr' ale e senza piume.
Col vostro ingegno al ciel sempre son mosso.
Dal vostro arbitrio son pallido et rosso,
Freddo al sol, caldo alle piu fredde brume.
Nel voler vostro è sol la voglia mia.
I miei pensier nel vostro cor si fanno.
Nel vostro fiato son le mie parole.
Come luna da se sol par ch'io sia,
Che gli ochi nostri in ciel veder non sanno
Se non quel tanto che n'accende il sole.

("Poems," cix, 19.)

XIV

See pp. 98 and 99

S'un casto amor, s'una pieta superna,
S'una fortuna infra dua amanti equale,
S'un' aspra sorte all'un dell' altro cale,
S'un spirto, s'un voler duo cor governa,
S'un' anima in duo corpi è facta ecterna,
Ambo levando al cielo e com pari ale,
S'amor d'un colpo e d'un dorato strale
Le viscier di duo pecti arda e discierna,
S'amar l'un l'altro e nessun se medesmo
D'un gusto e d'un dilecto a tal mercede,
C' a un fin voglia l'uno e l'altro porre,
Se mille e mill' altri non sarien centesmo
A tal nodo d'amore, a tanta fede, —
  sol l'isdegnio il puo rompere e sciorre?

("Poems," xliv.)

XV

See p. 100

S' i' amo sol di te, signior mie caro,
Quel che di te piu ami, non ti sdegni,
Che l'un dell' altro spirto s'innamora.
Quel che nel tuo bel volto bramo e 'mparo,
E mal compres' è dagl' umani ingegni,
Chi 'l vuol saper convien che prima mora.

("Poems," xlv.)

XVI

See p. 100, note 4

. . . .
O fussi sol la mie l'irsuta pelle,
Che del suo pel contesta, fa tal gonna,
Che con ventura stringe si bel seno,
Ch' i' l'are' pure il giorno ; o le pianelle,
Che fanno a quel di lor basa e colonna,
Ch' i' pur ne porterei duo nev' almeno.

("Poems," lxvi.)

XVII

See pp. 114 and 115

Felice spirto, che con zelo ardente,
Vechio alla morte, in vita il mio cor tieni
E fra mill' altrj tuo dilecti e beni
Me sol saluti fra piu nobil gente,
Chome mi fusti agli ochi, or alla mente
Per l'altru' fiate a consolar mi vieni ;
Onde la speme il duol par che raffreni,
Che non men che 'l disio l'anima sente.

Dunche trovando in te chi per me parla
Gratia di te per me fra tante cure,
Tal gratia ne ringratia chi ti scrive.
Che sconcia e grande uxur saria a farla,
Donandoti turpissime picture
Per riaver persone belle e vive.

("Poems," lxxxviii.)

XVIII

See p. 116

Se 'l mie rozzo martello i duri sassi
Forma d'uman aspecto or questo or quello,
Dal ministro, che 'l guida iscorgie e tiello,
Prendendo il moto, va con gli altrui passi.
Ma quel divin che in ciel alberga e stassi
Altri e se piu col proprio andar fa bello;
E se nessun martel senza martello
Si puo far, da quel vivo ogni altro fassi.
E perche 'l colpo è di valor piu pieno
Quant' alza piu se stesso alla fucina,
Sopra 'l mio questo al ciel n'è gito a volo.
Onde a me non finito verra meno,
S'or non gli da la fabbrica divina
Aiuto a farlo, c'al mondo era solo.

("Poems," ci.)

XIX

See pp. 116 and 117

Quand' el ministro de sospir mie tanti
Al mondo, agli ochi mei, a se si tolse,
Natura, che fra noi degnar lo volse,
Resto in vegognia, e chi lo vide in pianti.

Ma non come degli altri oggi si vanti
Del sol del sol, ch'allor ci spense e tolse,
Morte, c'amor ne vinse e farlo il tolse
In terra vivo e 'n ciel fra gli altri santi.
Cosi credette morte iniqua e rea
Finir il suon delle virtute sparte
E l'alma, che men bella esser potea.
Contrari effetti alluminan le carte
Di vita piu che 'n vita non solea,
E morto a'l ciel, c'allor non avea parte.

("Poems," c.)

XX

See pp. 117 and 118, note 2

. . . .

Amor, perche perdonj,
Tuo somma cortesia
Sie di belta qui tolta
A chj gusta et desia
Et data à gente stolta ?
Dhe, falla un 'altra volta
Pietosa drento et si brutta di fori,
Ch'a me dispiaccia et di me s'innamori.

("Poems," cix, 63.)

XXI

See p. 131, note 1

Che fie di me ? Che vo' tu far di nuovo
D'un arso legnio e d'un afflitto core ?
Dimmelo um pocho, Amore,
Accio che io sappi, in che stato io mi truovo.

("Poems," cx.)

Amor . . . .
D'un vechio stanco oma' puo' goder poco :
Che l'alma, quasi gunta al' altra riva,
Fa scudo a tuo di piu pietosi strali ;
E d'un legni' arso fa vil pruova il foco.
("Poems," cxix.)

XXII

See p. 153

O nott', o dolce tempo, benche nero,
Con pac' ogn' opra sempr'al fin assalta.
Ben ved' e ben intende chi t'exalta,
Et chi t' honor' ha l'intellett' intero.
Tu mozzi et tronchi ogni stanco pensiero,
Che l' humid' ombra et ogni quiet' appalta,
Et dall' infima parte alla piu alta
In sogno spesso porti, ov' ire spero.
O ombra del morir, per cui si ferma
Ogni miseri', a l'alma, al cor nemica,
Ultimo delli afflitti et buon rimedio,
Tu rendi sana nostra carn' inferma,
Rasciug' i pianti et posi ogni fatica
Et furi a chi ben vive ogn' ir' e tedio.
("Poems," lxxviii.)

XXIII

See p. 154

Mentre che 'l mie passato m' è presente,
Si come ogni or mi viene,
O mondo falso, allor conosco bene
L'errore e 'l danno dell' umana gente

Quel cor c' alfin consente
A tuo lusingi e a tuo van dilecti
Prochaccia all' alma dolorosi guai.
Ben lo sa chi lo sente,
Come spesso promecti
Altrui la pace e 'l ben, che tu non ai
Ne debbi aver gia mai.
Dunche a men gratia chi piu qua soggiorna ;
Che chi men vive piu lieve al ciel torna.

("Poems," cix, 32.)

XXIV

See p. 154

Chondocto da molt' anni all' ultim' ore,
Tardi conosco, o mondo, i tuo dilecti.
La pace, che non ai, altrui promecti
Et quel riposo c'anzi al nascer muore.
La vergognia e 'l timore
Degli anni, c'or prescrive
Il ciel, non mi rinnuova
Che 'l vecchio e dolce errore,
Nel qual chi troppo vive
L'anima ancide e nulla al corpo giova.
Il dico e so per pruova
Di me, che 'n ciel quel solo a miglior sorte
Ch'ebbe al suo parto piu pressa la morte.

("Poems," cix, 34.)

XXV

See pp. 158 and 159

Giunto è gia 'l corso della vita mia
Con tempestoso mar per fragil barca
Al comun porto, ov' a render si varca
Conto e ragion d'ogni opra trista e pia.

Onde l' affectuosa fantasia,
Che l'arte mi fece idol' e monarca,
Conosco or ben, com' era d'error carca,
E quel c'a mal suo grado ognuom desia.
Gli amorosi pensier, gia vani e lieti,
Che fien' or, s'a duo morte m'avicino ?
D'una so 'l certo, e l'altra mi minaccia.
Ne pinger ne scolpir fie piu che quieti
L'anima, volta a quell' amor divino
C'aperse a prender noi 'n croce le braccia.
("Poems," cxlvii.)

XXVI

See p. 159, note 1

Scarco d'un' importuna e greve salma,
Signior mie caro, e dal mondo disciolto,
Qual fragil legnio a te stanco rivolto
Da l'orribil procella in dolce calma . . .[1] . .
("Poems," clii.)

Di giorno in giorno insin da mie prim' annj,
Signior, sochorso tu mi fusti e guida . . .[2]
("Poems," cxlix.)

Le favole del mondo m'anno tolto
Il tempo, dato a contemplar Idio.
. . . .

[1] "Relieved of my troublesome and heavy remains, dear Lord, and detached from the world, I return to you, weary and like a fragile bark, out of the horrible tempest to the sweet calm . . ."

[2] "From day to day, from my earliest years, thou wert my succour and my guide, O Lord! . . ."

Amezzami la strada, c'al ciel sale,
Signior mie caro . . . .
Mectimi in odio quante 'l mondo vale,
E quante suo bellezze onoro e colo,
C'anzi morte caparri ecterna vita.[1]
("Poems," cl.)

Carico d'anni e di pechati pieno . . .[2]
("Poems," clv.)

Di morte certo, ma non gia dell' ora . . .[3]
("Poems," clvii.)

XXVII

See pp. 165 and 166

I' sto rinchiuso come la midolla
Da la suo scorza, qua pover' et solo.
. . . .
Io teng' un calabron' in un horciuolo,
In un sacco di quoio ossa et capresti,
Tre pilole di pec' in un bocciuolo.[4]
Gl' occhi di biffa macinat' et pesti,
I denti come tasti di stormento,

"The idle fancies of the world have robbed me of my time, which had been given to me for the contemplation of God . . . Dear Lord, shorten for me by half the road which leads to heaven, give me a hatred of everything which the world desires, of all its beauties which I honour and serve. May death gain for me eternal life!"

[2] "Burdened with years and heavy with sin."

[3] "Certain of my death, but not of the hour of my death . . ."

[4] An allusion to the stone from which he suffered. "Tre pietre nella vesica," explains Frey.

Ch'al moto lor la voce suon' e resti.
La faccia mia ha forma di spavento ;

. . . .

Mi cova in un orecchio un ragnatelo,
Nel' altro canta un grillo tutta notte ;
Ne dormo et russ' al catarroso anhelo.

. . . .

L'arte pregiata, ov' alcun tempo fui
Di tant' opinion, mi rec' à questo,
Povero vecchio et serv' in forz' altrui ;
Ch' i' son disfatto, s' i' non muoio presto

. . . .

Dilombato, crepat', infrant' et rotto
Son gia per le fatich', et l'osteria
È morte . . .

("Poems," lxxxi.)

PART II

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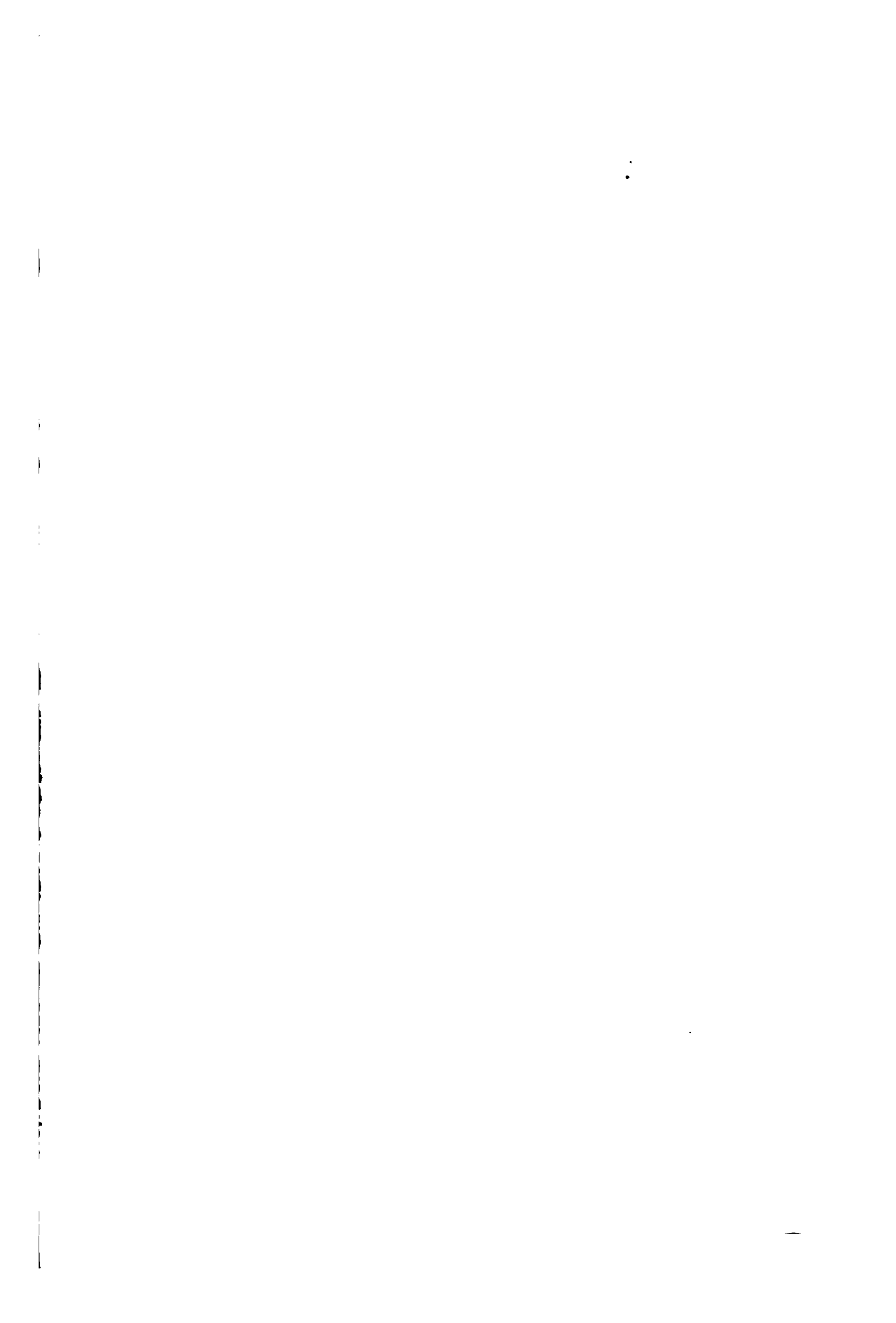

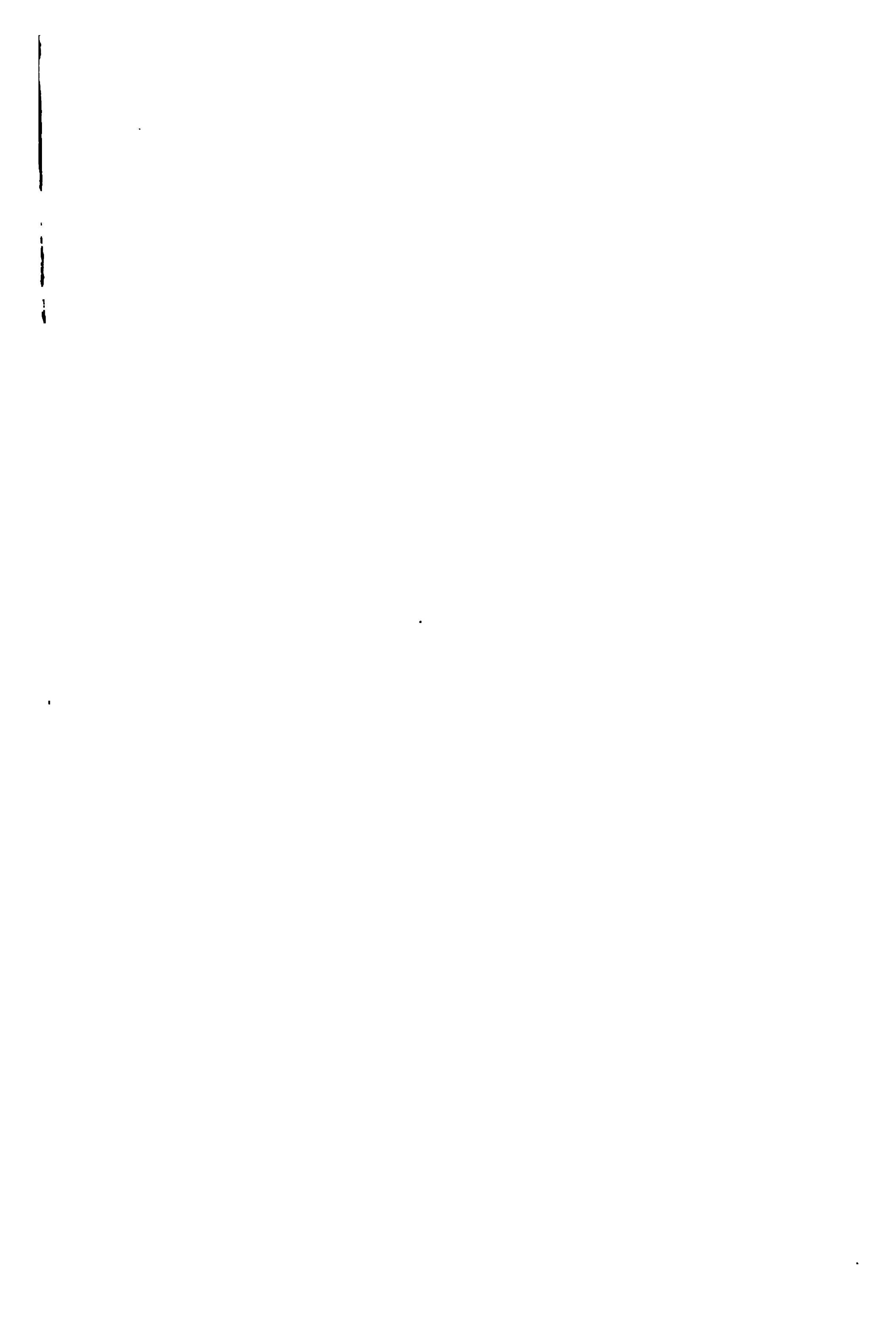

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